

**Feminist Theological Analysis and the Bias of Oppression:
Methodological Insights from the Work of Bernard Lonergan**

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Abstract

The goal of this study is to contribute to the methodologies of feminist theologies through the work of Bernard Lonergan, specifically through his approach to bias of the human mind. More specifically, Lonergan insisted that the cognitive nature of bias is actually polymorphous, and manifests as four distinct types of bias. I address two of these biases: the group bias and the general bias of common sense. By arguing that bias is a deformation in our understanding of the world, he also argued that it is a deformation in our constituting of ourselves in the world.

In studying the work of various feminist theologians, their methodologies commonly call for solutions to gendered oppression within a justice critical theory framework. While this is necessary, I find that the Christian virtue of charity is not accorded enough weight as a viable response to oppression, but rather subsumed into the ideal of justice itself within many Christian feminist solutions to gendered oppression. It is my hypothesis that a dialectical analysis of gendered oppression, based on Lonergan's notion of the general bias, can make a valid contribution to the dialogue of certain contemporary Catholic feminist theologies. This is explained fully in the first chapter.

In terms of methodology and organization, I present the state of the question through a representative overview of Catholic dialogue partners concerning the issue of the full agency of women, highlighting in particular the work of Susan Ross, Margaret Farley and Lisa Sowle Cahill. As the basis of Chapter 2, I identify how they address women's bodies, being and intersubjectivity in terms of Christian agency.

Chapters 3 and 4 serve as the theoretical foundation for this study, with a detailed exposition of Lonergan's notion of bias, and how biases interoperate dialectically. Chapter 3 is primary research drawn directly from Lonergan's writings. Chapter 4 includes the work of three Lonergan scholars: Robert Doran, Matthew Lamb and Patrick Byrne. Their interpretations of Lonergan's framework of dialectic

demonstrate how Lonergan's notions of the group and general biases operate and reinforce each other, and furthermore, negatively affect value appropriation.

Chapter 5 focuses on the work of Catholic feminist theologian, M. Shawn Copeland, who employs many of Lonergan's dialectical tools in her own work. This chapter is especially pertinent to my overall hypothesis since Copeland's work demonstrates how Lonergan's approach to bias can be effectively applied within a gendered context of oppression. Theologically, her work aptly illustrates that any solution to gendered oppression cannot be situated outside the infusion of God's redeeming grace. This approach to bias is a matter of social justice, but includes a solution that can only be authentically realized through the gift of God's grace.

Finally, Chapter 6 stands as a concise summary of my research findings in this study. By exploring Lonergan's notion of bias in sufficient depth, particularly his contention that the nature of human bias is cognitively polymorphic, I validate my suspicion that many feminist theologians methodologically treat bias as a homogeneous phenomenon of human thinking. Lonergan's unique approach to human dialectic casts human oppression in a more comprehensive light when placed within his broader theory-interiority heuristic framework, as exemplified within the work of M. Shawn Copeland. By recognizing the more problematic form of the general bias of common sense and how it exacerbates the group bias, the theologian can thereby view the scope of the problem of contextual oppression more broadly. When both biases are identified, the problem of the dialectic at hand calls for a viewpoint that appeals to justice, but justice that is based on divine-human agency.

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Chapter 1. Introductory Comments

The overriding goal of this study is to arrive at an “insight into the various modes of the flight from understanding” or what Bernard Lonergan characterizes as bias of the human mind.¹ I wish to understand Lonergan’s insistence that the cognitive nature of bias is actually polymorphous and manifests as four distinct types of bias. Furthermore, Lonergan argues that bias is not only a deformation in our understanding of the world; it is also a deformation in our constituting of ourselves in the world.

My hope to obtain such an insight stems from two concerns. First, I agree with Lonergan’s assertion, as noted in the preface of *Insight*, that bias is the most significant problem facing humanity.² Second, in studying the work of a variety of feminist theologians, I have come to observe that most treat the problem of patriarchy in terms of an exclusive focus on what Lonergan calls the group bias.

This leads me to question then whether Lonergan’s notion and broader explanation of bias, with his analysis not only of the group bias but also, and more importantly, of the general bias of common sense, could contribute to the basic methodological approach used within feminist theology. If so, could this consideration possibly strengthen feminist theologies?

Therefore, in my hopes to arrive at a fuller understanding of bias and how it is treated by select feminist theologians, this study is intended to be a serious

¹ Bernard Lonergan, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, Frederick Crowe and Robert Doran (eds.), (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) 4.

² Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 8.

investigation into the nature of bias in relation to the methodological approaches generally accepted and employed within feminist theologies. These methodologies commonly call for solutions to gendered oppression that seem to place a priority on justice. My hypothesis is that a broader analysis of bias based on the work of Lonergan opens doors to alternative approaches that introduce a critical theological dimension in a distinctive way. With these thoughts in mind, this study proceeds from a feminist theological perspective that incorporates key notions from Bernard Lonergan.

At the outset, this may seem perplexing to the reader as Bernard Lonergan was not a professed feminist; neither is he a scholar to whom most contemporary feminist theologians turn in support of their critical theory methodologies. Yet his categories and treatment of bias, as well as his notions of *humanum* and authenticity, offer critical insight into the phenomenology of bias and oppression. Moreover, his solution to the biases that cause and sustain long-term oppression is wholly theological in that divine grace fuels the solution in a way that justice cannot do on its own. And he approaches human knowing not from a male-only or male-assumed perspective, but rather from the perspective of the human being as the knower-as-subject,

It is given that there is sensing, perceiving, imaging, inquiring, understanding, conceiving, reflecting, grasping the unconditioned, and judging, but is there any one thing there, where by 'thing' is meant a unity-identity-whole that senses, perceives, imagines, and inquires, and so on? ...The self is appropriated in the sense that we conceive

it and judge it, but that very conceiving and judging enables us to find it; and, fundamentally, we can find it in so far as we ask questions.³

Hence, Lonergan appeals to the process of the self-discovering-itself as unity-identity-whole through the act of inquiry. While a distinctly human ability, it is individual, unique to each person, and a means to self-authenticity in relation to the values in our lives that we question, assess, and judge. Through this process of self-appropriation, we come to understand how we engage in the process of discovering and living out the meaning of ourselves and our lives. Most importantly, neither the process of knowing nor the self-appropriation process of discovering this in ourselves are treated by Lonergan as biologically gendered abilities.

1.1. **Statement of the Problem**

The problem that will be addressed in this research project is twofold. First, many critical theories within the field of theological ethics point to the notion of justice⁴ as the primary solution to human oppression. Indeed, this is characteristic of many liberation theologies like that of Gustavo Gutierrez who proposed justice as part of the overall theological answer to human oppression. What Gutierrez proposed was an interrelated solution based on God's grace to infuse a social

³ Bernard Lonergan, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: Understanding and Being: The Halifax Lectures on Insight*, Elizabeth Morelli and Mark Morelli (eds.), (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 137-139.

⁴ Along with other Catholic feminist theologians, including Margaret Farley and Lisa Sowle Cahill, I appeal to the notion of justice proposed by Aquinas as "the constant and perpetual will to render to each one his right." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 58, a.1. This definition will be further expounded in this chapter.

justice framework that would act to counter those forces in society that cause endless cycles of dire poverty.⁵

Many North American feminist theologies, developing from or growing out of the liberation theologies of the last half of the twentieth century, have followed Gutierrez with a justice critical theory framework. However, they do not seem to place as strong an emphasis on the theological solution of grace, as does Gutierrez. I want to re-examine the kind of problem to which their proposed solutions respond for I am concerned that as a theological response, an appeal primarily to justice may be insufficient. Indeed, I find that the Christian virtue of charity is not accorded enough weight as a viable response to oppression, but is rather subsumed into the ideal of justice itself within many Christian feminist solutions to oppression. This prompts me to investigate how charity is understood in relation to justice and how agency is constituted in response to oppression. More specifically, one can ask what role God plays in terms of grace and charity, in conjunction with human agency.

⁵ The framework for Gutierrez' liberation theology, as laid out in *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, stands on three essential pillars: Christian discipleship, personal encounter with God, and divine and human solidarity with the poor. While seemingly simple, it is an approach that does not stand on a fixed theoretical theology, but a dynamic human phenomenon infused with God's grace. While 'justice' is certainly part of the ultimate and desired solution, it is one feature of a multi-faceted liberation from the oppression and the death of poverty. Thus, 'justice' at least for Gutierrez, does not simply refer to the removal of the oppressor or the eradication of the oppressive conditions of a context in question. It is much more than fairness, righteousness or receiving one's due. See Gustavo Gutierrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2010) and *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (New York: Orbis, 1988). Also, see Kenneth Melchin, "Charity and Justice in Economic Life," *Theoforum*, 43:1-2 (2012) 135-152, where he discusses grace-infused charity as proposed by Gutierrez in *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, as a response to injustice.

With Lonergan's unique approach to cognitive bias, one can methodologically arrive at a deeper understanding of the problem of oppression, which leads one to a more nuanced critical understanding of the necessary theological component of a solution to oppression *in addition* to calls for justice. Indeed, it is Lonergan's analysis of the general bias of common sense that explores more fully the kind of problem created by bias in contexts of oppression.

Proposing any solution as theologically sound must be arrived at through sound methodical analysis. Perhaps, then, an applied theological method to arrive at a fuller understanding of human oppression should include a dialectical analysis tool that transforms the solution to one that begins with the concern for justice, but goes further to investigate higher values that are properly theological. Such values would give a shape and framework for understanding how justice might be pursued in a brighter light of charity and grace. Therefore, I propose that a dialectical analysis of this problem focus on the distinction between Bernard Lonergan's notions of the group and general biases.⁶ The solution he offers in light of the general bias and his analysis of the theological virtue of charity may indeed augment the current conversation among key contributors on the treatment and assessment of bias and solutions to bias against women.

⁶ It is important to note at this point that Lonergan distinguished four types of bias, each of which constitutes a particular type of a "flight from understanding" or a scotosis, which is simply "an incomplete development in the intelligent and reasonable use of one's own intelligence and reasonableness." A sufficient explanation of these four are explained if offered in chapter 3, however my focus is on two of them: the group bias and the general bias of common sense which are treated in detail in the same chapter.

1.2. Hypothesis

It is my hypothesis that a dialectical analysis of gendered oppression based on Lonergan's notion of the general bias can make a contribution to the dialogue of certain contemporary North American Catholic feminist theologies. I assert that the distinction between Lonergan's notions of the group and general biases may help to identify what may possibly deepen the critical analysis of this issue, as an example of human oppression. As Lonergan illustrates, when one moves from a group to a general bias analysis, one is forced to re-define the original problem due to the identification of common sense⁷ biases present in positions and counterpositions of the dialectic at hand.

A group-bias analysis, on its own, does not lend itself to opening the exploration to contributions that can arise from the turn to interiority. Such a turn to interiority brings about a deeper and more precise understanding of the general bias and constitutive meaning. Moreover, a general bias analysis probes limitations arising from common sense opinions and ideas that influence dialectical analysis.

Furthermore, I assert that such dialectical analysis might benefit from Lonergan's approach to human being, specifically his analysis of the four distinct realms of meaning. While constituent meaning is sought in feminist theological analysis, primarily at the level of human experience, Lonergan posits that the ability

⁷ The term 'common sense' as denoted here, and as Lonergan intends, does not reflect the general understanding and use of the term in our current society, as in the ability to think and behave in a reasonable way and to make good decisions. Lonergan's use of the term has a much more nuanced meaning as will be explained thoroughly in chapter 3.

of the theologian to differentiate between these realms of meaning within human living comes about from the turn to interiority within the third realm. Thus, I further propose that Catholic feminist theologians who focus on the group bias may benefit by completing this transition by taking the turn to interiority that provides greater precision as well as critical controls for understanding the role of constitutive meaning in the issues they address. Such a framework of constitutive meaning can work toward implementing a solution that incorporates meaning on the level of interiority (Lonergan's third stage of constitutive meaning) and can reveal a deeper understanding of subject agency, as I intend to articulate here.

1.3. Parameters of the Study

As a Catholic feminist theologian, I am ultimately interested in the contemporary methodologies of those within this field. Aside from the three interlocutors chosen for this study, I appeal mainly to North American Catholic theologians. I also reference other Christian theologians such as ethicists, as well as a variety of Lonergan scholars and philosophers whose ideas are germane to my subject matter.

Given that the overall field of feminist theology encompasses a variety of distinct socio-cultural, sexual, and linguistic perspectives (e.g., Latina theology or queer theology), I want to note that I have a distinct perspective, albeit hopefully not a limiting or biased one. Let me explain. As chapter 5 indicates, I will present and analyze the theological work of M. Shawn Copeland whose work in womanist theology reflects the history, experience, and spirituality of black American women. I also refer on occasion to the feminist theologies of women scholars whose

existential perspectives do not represent my own, which is white, North American, and socio-economically privileged.

While my intent is not to speak on behalf of any other existential perspective or inadvertently impose my own biases and beliefs onto another's context, I believe that I can theologically speak *in conjunction* with other voices and scholarly convictions, or at the very least to support them. Otherwise, I could not name my theology either Christian or feminist, nor could I partake in any effort aimed at solidarity with the concerns of feminist theology in general and oppressed women whatever their socio-cultural location.

1.4. Explanation and Justification of Methodology

First, to situate and present the state of the question, I will offer a representative overview of the dialogue partners within the Catholic Church concerning the issue of the full agency of women, highlighting the work of Susan Ross, Margaret Farley and Lisa Sowle Cahill. Specifically, I will look to identify how they address the issues of women's bodies, beings, and intersubjectivity in terms of Christian agency. I contend that their respective bodies of work include key notions foundational to a significant portion of contemporary critical commentary on women's agency that is feminist and theological.

My presentation of their theologies constitutes a significant portion of chapter 2, which is followed by a brief historical recap of what I view as the two key philosophical currents that have been influential in developing and communicating an understanding of operative bias within oppressive contexts: the critical theory of the Frankfurt School and the liberation theory of Paolo Freire. While I do not see

the necessity of presenting a detailed explanation of the history of critical theory and liberation philosophy writ large, it is important to note that feminist theologies employ a critique of oppression that is shared, at least conceptually, with both.

Chapters 3 and 4 constitute a detailed exposition of Lonergan's notion of bias and how biases interoperate dialectically; both chapters serve as the theoretical foundation for the overall study. The research for chapter 3 is primary research in that it is drawn from a variety of Lonergan's writings that represent his thought on cognitive scotosis (including biases), dialectic and his theological solution to human bias.

Chapter 4 is based on the work of three prominent Lonergan scholars: Robert Doran, Matthew Lamb and Patrick Byrne whose interpretation of Lonergan's framework of dialectic is particularly valuable in highlighting how Lonergan's notions of the group and general biases operate and reinforce each other. Through the respective work of these three scholars, in particular their understanding of how the general bias as the basis for contextual analysis amplifies the detrimental effects of the group bias of the context, I hope to illustrate with precision how these biases negatively affect value appropriation within a context of biased oppression.

Clearly, criticism of using a Lonerganian framework for a feminist dialectical problem is anticipated. Bernard Lonergan was not a professed feminist and his approach to history and his Christian worldview was not based on a particular feminist methodology. As such, he is neither a philosopher or theologian to whom most feminist critical theorists turn.

One should ask what valid contribution a Lonerganian analysis might bring to any type of feminist theology and indeed this is the central quest of this thesis. I believe he can contribute much to the critical feminist approach within theology.

Rather than attempt a theoretical reply to this question, my approach is to provide an illustration in chapter 5 of a prominent and respected Catholic feminist theologian, M. Shawn Copeland, who employs many of Lonergan's dialectical tools in her own work. The central question from which I will work in this section is how does Copeland draw on Lonergan's idea of the dialectic of general bias to develop distinctive contributions to feminist conversations on the question of women's agency and structural sin? What aspects does she deem valuable and, conversely, limiting? This chapter is especially pertinent to my overall hypothesis since Copeland's work demonstrates that Lonergan's approach to bias can be effectively applied within a gendered context of oppression.

Lonergan argued that all human beings are capable of and subject to bias. In fact, he agrees with feminist theorists that approaches to questions of bias must be contextually sensitive at the level of the content of meaning, yet a universal structure can be discovered at the level of operations of meaning, regardless of one's gender.

Furthermore, while Lonergan's analysis is subject-centered, he finds insights for explaining structural patterns that operate more broadly in society and history. Thus, he addresses the specific context as well as the larger human community in which that context exists. As I hope to clearly show with this matrix, change comes about beginning with the individual subject (regardless of gender,

culture, language, or historical context) through the operations within the process of self-appropriation, driven by attention to the concrete and empirical data of consciousness.

Lonergan begins with the individual as the subject, differentiating the human subject from the objects known. With his analysis of the bias within a human structure, he effectively questions and assesses a cultural matrix of a particular context in terms of relations, meanings, values, and collaborations. In this manner, he is comprehensive in assessing the dialectical nature of *any* context. But his approach to bias does so with the premise that any solution to the decline and recovery generated by such a matrix cannot be situated without the infusion of God's redeeming grace. For Lonergan, this approach to bias is a matter of social justice, but one that can only be authentically effectuated through the gift of God's divine grace.

Finally, chapter 6 stands as a concise summary of my research findings in this study. By exploring Lonergan's notion of bias in sufficient depth, particularly his contention that the nature of human bias is cognitively polymorphic, I have validated my suspicion that many feminist theologians methodologically treat bias as a homogeneous phenomenon of human thinking, that it is generally accepted as a given of human behaviour. Lonergan's unique approach to human dialectic, however, casts human oppression in a more comprehensive light by placing it within his broader theory-interiority heuristic framework, as exemplified by the work of M. Shawn Copeland.

Such analysis reveals the distinct parameters of a more traditional group-bias analysis; yet when a group-bias analysis is augmented by a general bias analysis, a more precise and deeper understanding of subject agency and authenticity can be revealed. By recognizing the more problematic form of the general bias of common sense and how it exacerbates the group bias, the theologian is thereby positioned to view the scope of the problem of contextual oppression more broadly. When both biases are identified, particularly how they reinforce each other, the problem of the dialectic at hand calls for a viewpoint that appeals to justice, but justice that is based on divine-human agency.

Finally, I conclude this study with a few suggestions for further research, specifically how other analytical tools from Lonergan may broaden feminist theological methodologies.

1.5. Terminology and Definitions

One of the key challenges of studying Lonergan's thought is understanding his intended meaning of a variety of terms that very often differ from what is commonly understood and applied in the English language. Even within the fields of Western philosophy and Christian theology, many terms used by Lonergan do not reflect their general comprehension and use, particularly in popular media and culture. For instance, Lonergan's use of the word 'conversion' does not intend the meaning widely understood within popular twenty-first century North American culture. The same can be said of his understanding of 'method' and 'insight' within philosophical parlance. Therefore, it is particularly important that my understanding and use of Lonergan's vocabulary is clear for my purposes and those of the

readers'. However, rather than elucidate each Lonerganian term in this section, I have chosen to explain such terms as they are presented mainly in chapter 3 within Lonergan's larger notions and conceptual schematics.

What follows in the remainder of this chapter are those terms from common use within feminist theological discussions that should not go undefined and will help to reference and frame the ensuing discussion. They include: oppression (and patriarchal oppression); solidarity; and praxis. While I speak more descriptively in the next chapter of feminist theologies, the goal of justice as a state of just human living, or justice as a solution to the sin of oppression, I wish to include these three terms here.

The term *oppression* is widely used in many scholarly fields, which renders it fairly difficult to define with ease. For my purposes, I mean that state of being subject to unjust treatment or control such as persecution, abuse, maltreatment, suppression, and subjugation. With respect to the oppression of women, it includes violence that is perpetrated on women due to their gender and/or sexuality, but which is not necessarily constituted only as physical forms of violence. In this sense, an oppressor or oppressive group takes advantage of a human being's condition of vulnerability, vulnerability which can be physical, emotional, mental, or economic. Therefore, oppression of women as a whole is neither symmetrical nor can it be generalized since:

A woman's identity is simultaneously constructed by the multiple categories of race, class, sexuality, age, nationality, physical ability and so on. Because women are not a homogenous group, feminists are called to recognize the particular mixture of identities,

as well as the multilayers and disproportional experiences of oppression that it entails.⁸

From a feminist theological perspective, I understand oppression of women to be based on implicit or explicit “sexism in which women are not accorded full humanity and equal status with men, often combined with an exclusion of women from theological reflection and a disregard for their particular voice and contribution.”⁹ As Linda Hogan writes:

The assumption that maleness is co-extensive with humanness underlies all manifestations of patriarchy. It is this very exclusion of female experience from our definition and understanding of humanity which feminists identify as patriarchal oppression at its most potent. ...Oppression has taken the form of exclusion from centers of decision-making, but also, and perhaps more importantly, exclusion from our understanding of what it means to be human.¹⁰

Feminist theologies speak to this kind of exclusion and disregard in reference to androcentrism (the notion that the male of the human species is normative) and patriarchy (systematized sexism that creates privileges that favour men over women, that renders women less empowered by men). As well, oppressive action toward women attempts to inhibit their full humanity, spirituality, and religious experience, flourishing on the personal level, and excludes or

⁸ Laura Taylor, “Redeeming Christ: Imitation or (Re)citation?”, in Susan Abraham and Elena Procaro-Foley (eds.), *Frontiers in Catholic Feminist Theology: Shoulder to Shoulder* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009) 226, note 1.

⁹ L. Peacore, “Feminist Theologies,” in William A. Dyrness and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen (eds.), *Global Dictionary of Theology: A Resource for the Worldwide Church* (Downer’s Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2009) 319.

¹⁰ Linda Hogan, *From Women’s Experience to Feminist Theology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016) 28.

prevents their full participation in positions of influence and leadership within the academy and the Church.

Feminist theological methodologies often arrive at solutions to patriarchal oppression that appeal widely to the notion of justice and more specifically to the term *solidarity*. While I address the term justice in much more depth in chapter 2, I will attempt here to offer a definition of solidarity. This is challenging, as I have noticed that it is not well defined within feminist theologies; rather, it is used very broadly and frequently, suggesting that its meaning is or has become rather malleable. Indeed, I find that in a variety of liberation theologies it stands for a kind of all-encompassing notion of support with anyone who lives in a state of oppression.

Yet, as a theological notion, one that often constitutes part of a solution to counter injustice, it must mean something more than mere compassion. Most theologians recognize the use of the term during the emergence of liberation theologies in the last half of the twentieth century, specifically as used by Gustavo Gutierrez: “the praxis on which liberation theology reflects is a praxis of solidarity in the interests of liberation and is inspired by the gospel.”¹¹ Thus, for Gutierrez, solidarity is relational, active, and oriented toward human freedom.

Elizabeth Johnson’s notion of solidarity stems from this approach, but is more specific. She places it within a category of meaning where it is much more than a generic relationship of likeminded togetherness:

¹¹ Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 6.

Rather, it connotes a vital union of interests in a group, a genuine community of desires, expectations, and goals, issuing in action and social cohesion, usually in the face of opposition. Solidarity is a type of communion in which deep connection with others is forged in such a way that their sufferings and joys become part of one's own personal concern and a spur to transformative action. It entails a movement out of a selfish seclusion and into relationship where people bear one another up in mutual giving and receiving. It is inseparable from liberating praxis for the common good.¹²

Not surprisingly, Johnson's approach to solidarity directly echoes that of Catholic Social Teaching (CST), which insists on the inherent uniqueness and dignity of each person, and our shared humanity as social beings. CST further insists that the goal of just human living must stand on the Christian virtue of solidarity that can overcome the structures of sin in this world with the help of divine grace.¹³ It is from this perspective that I treat the notion of Christian solidarity. In my mind, solidarity is neither a cliché nor a quick-fix solution.

Praxis is another term that is commonly used within the discourses of liberation theologies, thus having broad application. It also seems to me to have evolved into a notion that appeals to a variety of meanings. In terms of liberation theologies, the meaning I intend stems from Matthew Lamb's work: *Solidarity with Victims: Toward a Theology of Social Transformation*.¹⁴

¹² Elizabeth Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets: A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints* (Ottawa, Ontario: Novalis, 1998) 175.

¹³ Charles Curran, *Catholic Social Teaching, 1891-Present: A Historical, Theological, and Ethical Analysis* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2002) 36.

¹⁴ Matthew Lamb, *Solidarity with Victims: Toward a Theology of Social Transformation* (New York: Crossroad, 1982).

Like many theologians, Lamb uses the term to denote a theological goal as an agapic action, or the opposite of “apathetic resignation or heroic recrimination”.¹⁵ In contrast, agapic action constitutes the theological response to the perversity of bias throughout human history and involves ongoing conversion away from sin as bias: “Just as self-transcending love transformatively intensifies the quest for justice, so a faith born of that love transformatively intensifies reason into a wisdom.”¹⁶

With specific reference to feminist theologies, Isherwood and McEwan offer a comprehensive definition worth quoting at length:

Liberation theologians define their method of doing theology as critical reflection on praxis in light of the Word of God. The Christian and the Christian community are called by their religious belief to a praxis that involves real charity, action and commitment to the service of women and men. In the context of the massive human suffering experienced by the majority of the world's citizens, praxis is inextricably linked with the commandment of love and the demands for justice, and becomes the attempt to live the gospel by sharing in the lives and struggles of the poor and by striving to bring about the changes needed to eliminate such suffering and to liberate them...Theologizing in the light of past and present injustices and oppressions demands conversion of sinful structures and systems, and individuals and community commitment to the *basilea*. Christian praxis cannot be limited to private virtues but necessarily contains socio-political involvement.¹⁷

In this explanation, praxis is seen as part of the theological response to the Christian call for charity and love in human action to counter suffering, injustice,

¹⁵ Matthew Lamb, *Solidarity with Victims* 7.

¹⁶ Matthew Lamb, *Solidarity with Victims* 10.

¹⁷ Lisa Isherwood and Dorothea McEwan (eds.), *An A-Z of Feminist Theology* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016) 184.

and oppression. Isherwood and McEwan also emphasize that theological praxis is dialectical, based on the interrelationship of theory and action.

A note on my use of gendered terminology in this study is warranted. While I am an advocate of gender neutral language, often it is unavoidable. Unless I specify otherwise, the use of feminine and masculine pronouns is interchangeable. For instance, I may refer to a person as *she* in one discussion, and *he* in another; no gender stereotyping is intended, rather they are meant generically in each case.

Finally, I think it important to set out what I envision to be the standard for just human living, or the benchmark to which I compare systems and states of oppression in my own feminist theology. Thus, I directly reference Robert Doran's notion of *humanum*, which derives from Lonergan's. Doran beautifully writes:

I envision this world-cultural alternative, not as a megaculture imposed on cultural particularities, but as a process of intercultural dialogue and mutual enrichment that enjoys the diversities and frees us to grow, precisely by the process of 'passing over' into the differences of others and returning to our own difference enriched by what we have learned in the process. Some of the differences involve culture and race, gender and sexual orientation, religious tradition and cultural heritage. And so a theology that reflects on the role of a religion in such a cultural matrix should do its utmost to specify that *humanum*.¹⁸

I only introduce this as benchmark at this point, and delve into this notion much more in discussion of Lonergan's scale of values for human living in a later

¹⁸ See, Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990) 37-38.

chapter. With these thoughts in mind, I now turn to the subject of feminist theology and my interlocutors.

Chapter 2. State of the Question

Before introducing my interlocutors, I want to offer first a baseline to frame the discussion that follows in this chapter. First, I will discuss the notion of oppression within Catholic feminist theologies, as it directly stems from its definition in the previous introductory chapter. My goal here is to position the essential characteristics of Catholic feminist theology within the larger field of contextual theology and more particularly the notion of human oppression within Christian feminism. Then I will present highlights of the work of each of my three interlocutors in this regard and discuss how they address oppression specifically regarding their treatment of the notions of body, being, and intersubjectivity of women.

2.1. Foundational Pillars of Feminist Theologies

Since their emergence in the 1960s, feminist theologies have made groundbreaking progress in retrieving women's place in history, analyzing their oppression—particularly within Christian contexts, promoting women's agency within and outside of Church walls, and seeking solutions to institutionalized bias that continues to prevent women's full spiritual and religious flourishing.

Now, some fifty years later, this body of scholarly work is as varied in focus, discourses, and methodologies as are those of us who do it. Collectively, feminist theologians address every area of theological research including scripture, praxis, ritual, experience, ecumenism, and history, to name a few. Yet, the one common thread is the goal of eradicating gender and sexual oppression. Despite the vast

growth and varied development of feminist theologies, our theological vision of a new world of justice, based on the liberating love of God, remains constant.

Although feminism has made great strides particularly in North America and Western Europe, as Elizabeth Johnson explains, sexist oppression is still very much a part of the foundational and operative fabric of the majority of the world's societies and cultures.

For most of history, women have been denied political, economic, leadership and educational rights. In no country in the world are these yet equal in practice to the rights of men. According to the United Nations...women work three-fourths of the world's working hours, own one-tenth of the world's wealth and one-hundredth of the world's land and form two-thirds of the world's illiterate people...[and] over three-fourths of the world's starving people are women with their dependent children...[T]o make a dark picture even bleaker, women are bodily and sexually exploited, physically abused, raped, battered and murdered. The indisputable fact is that men do this to women in a way and to a degree that women do not do to men.¹⁹

Put in the context of Christianity, Johnson continues:

Women are marginalized not only by theory; church practice likewise effects their exclusion. They may not receive all seven sacraments. They may not preach or preside in the liturgical assembly, or mediate God's grace in officially sacramental ways. The primary effect is to make women dependent on a male clergy for such mediation of God's grace. Such exclusion also bars them from centers of significant ecclesial decision-making, law-making, symbol-awaking, and other public leadership roles in the institution. Awareness of this subordination has created a crisis over the Eucharist for many women. As Rosemary Radford Ruether expresses it, women come to the table to be nourished by the word of God and the bread of life only to leave still starved because what has been powerfully ritualized is their own subordination...sexism [which] is contrary to God's intent.²⁰

¹⁹ Elizabeth Johnson, *Abounding in Kindness — Writings for the People of God* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2015) 58-59.

²⁰ Elizabeth Johnson, *Abounding in Kindness* 63-64.

Thus, in response to this continued global reality, feminist theologies deconstruct oppressive contexts through methodical analysis (such as institutional bias against women) and in doing so, identify the short- and long-term harm caused to women, children and men, supported by the formulation and recommendation of solutions that appeal to justice based on the eradication of oppressive contexts, from solidarity with victims to dismantling of oppressive structures.

While many short and long descriptions exist, I chose two passages from Catholic theologians, Sandra Schneiders and Elizabeth Johnson, that I believe encapsulate the main principles and goals of Christian feminist theologies writ large. Beginning with Schneiders and followed by Johnson:

Feminism, I would propose, is a comprehensive ideology which is rooted in women's experience of sexual oppression, engages in a critique of patriarchy as an essentially dysfunctional system, embraces an alternative vision for humanity and the earth, and actively seeks to bring this vision to realization.²¹

Feminist theology is that aspect of the endeavor that seeks to interpret the intelligibility and accountability of the faith through the lens of women's flourishing...Not only has the [Christian faith] been the bearer of the gracious and liberating good news of salvation and of life-affirming ways to follow Christ, but it also bears deeply embedded attitudes of the male's privileged place before God coupled with practices of exclusion that have severely limited and harmed women in their spiritual search...Amid incalculable personal, political, and spiritual suffering resulting from women's subordination in theory and practice, Christian feminism labors to bring the community, its symbols and practices, into a closer coherence with the reign of God's justice...[I]t seeks to reinterpret the symbols and ethics of faith at the deepest level so as to subvert

²¹ Sandra Marie Schneiders, *Beyond Patching: Faith and Feminism in the Catholic Church* (New York: Paulist Press, 2004) 15.

misogyny and release a public and permanent blessing on being female.²²

Given the modern philosophical 'turn to the subject',²³ we can see the rather recent emergence of certain Christian feminist theologies as inevitable. Indeed, the advent and continued development of feminist theologies echoed the phenomenon of Western second wave feminism in the last quarter of the 20th century.

As a subfield of Christian theologies, feminist theologians address their human subjects as women whose full religious and spiritual agency has been oppressed by the male hierarchy and tradition of their Christian faith, whose carriers of meaning have been skewed in favour of their oppression. Their theologies speak to their intelligence and wisdom in relation to the whole of human life (past, present, and future) as well as the authenticity of their voices and the soteriological and Christological messages of their active faith. It is precisely those authentic messages of their faith that they want to retrieve and re-situate into their current cultural context to help overcome the oppression they experience.

One could not say, however, that there is one methodological norm employed by feminist theologies or even liberation theologies for that matter;

²² Elizabeth Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets: A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints* (Ottawa, Ontario: Novalis, 1989) 35-36.

²³ Charles Taylor's detailed investigation into the modern philosophical turn to the self is invaluable. See in particular Part II - Inwardness, in *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

rather, they begin with the distinctive perspective of women where the subject and object of analysis are viewed through a “specifically feminist angle of vision.”²⁴

For Catholic feminist theologians, three themes in particular sit front and centre for inquiry: anthropology, Christology, and ecclesiology.²⁵ At the risk of simplification, methodologies employed by feminist theologians generally include a three-pronged approach²⁶ that involves, first, the critique of tradition based on the fact that women’s voices have been absent throughout the vast history of the Christian Church, and in most organized Christian churches, still are. It also addresses the fact that because women’s voices have been and continue to be largely absent, there also continues to be a lack of credible influence and authority throughout the organization. So while women’s voices are infrequently invited by ecclesial powers to be heard, the fact that no ecclesial power includes a credible and influential women’s component renders whatever voice they have rather mute. The critique of tradition also recognizes that, theologically and ontologically, women have been conceptualized as inferior to men.

Second, feminist theologians move to recover women’s voices and participation in Christian history by probing their history and agency in the Church. Such work revealed that while their voices and work within the Church was

²⁴ Anne E. Carr, “The New Vision of Feminist Theology,” in Catherine Mowry LaCugna (ed.), *Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1993) 25.

²⁵ Susan Abraham and Elena Procario-Foley, *Frontiers in Catholic Feminist Theology* (Minneapolis, MI: Fortress Press, 2009) 2.

²⁶ Anne E. Carr, “The New Vision of Feminist Theology,” 8-13. In this short text, Carr offers one of the most succinct explanations of feminist theological method and focuses on the pioneering work led by Rosemary Radford Ruether and Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza.

unnoticed, overlooked, or denied altogether, the meaning of their presence in the last two thousand years is significant and effective.

Finally, theological method in this regard moves then to reconstruct women's history in the Church. In other words, as Anne Carr notes, this third task involves "the incorporation of both the newly understood historical material and the contemporary insights of the now plural feminist community into the constructive work of theology."²⁷

As this three-pronged approach has been carried out over the last four decades, the impact of the critique of tradition, recovery, and reconstruction on how these scholars teach revelation, scripture, anthropology, the Trinity, grace, sin, and ecclesiology, just to name a few, has been profound. At this point in the evolution of a feminist theological method, these scholars represent a variety of Christian women's voices in just as many contexts globally. They analyze and critique various sources of data: gender, race, language, sacraments, Church doctrine, symbols, tradition, and of course, scripture. Thus, the major contemporary approaches in Catholic theology (transcendental, correlational, analytical, hermeneutical, and liberational frameworks) are employed by feminist theologians but adapted to the feminist lens and individual contexts: for example, womanist and Asian feminist theologies.

²⁷ Anne E. Carr, "The New Vision of Feminist Theology," 10.

At this point I want to echo some recent statements made by María Pilar Aquino that speak to feminist theologies and the state of this collective body of work. Specifically, she shares three concerns.²⁸

First, the notion of *justice*, as a part of the solution or response to sexual oppression and patriarchy, remains elusive for women. While “the content of [feminist theologies of liberation] is understood as the establishment of a new world of justice” promoted by the knowledge and practices that transform the sin of this present world to those of God’s will, how we understand justice at this juncture in history is quite vague.

And in the face of the entrenched forces of kyriarchal globalization,²⁹ whatever one thinks justice to be remains practically unrealizable. Again, while liberation theologies have as their goal the eradication of human (and arguably ecological) oppression, justice as a solution encompasses a wide range of possibilities. Does justice point to an end-state or end-goal for women’s emancipation or does it include the process and praxis of getting there? Mary McClintock-Fulkerson remarks that we have a “vision of God’s realm as one of

²⁸ María Pilar Aquino, “Theology and Identity in the Context of Globalization,” in Mary McClintock Fulkerson and Sheila Briggs (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 418–440.

²⁹ Note that Aquino’s use of the term ‘kyriarchal globalization’ echoes Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza’s meaning of ‘kyriarchy’ as she elucidates in the following essay, María Pilar Aquino, “The Dynamics of Globalization and the University: Toward a Radical Democratic-Emancipatory Transformation”, in Fernando F. Segovia (ed.) *Toward a New Heaven and a New Earth: Essays in Honor of Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003) 385–406.

justice...[a] utopian justice, always coming...an eschatological horizon” that we do not yet realize.³⁰

How then do we discern what justice should include now, as part of a theological solution: the means to ensure that women can achieve full spiritual flourishing as God intends, the removal of structural and systematic barriers to that end, and forgiveness and liberation of the oppressor?

Second, Aquino notes that the state of feminist theology writ large has reached the stifling point of strangulation by ‘isms’, specifically “the rhetorical labyrinth of post-neoisms”³¹ that directly affects the relevance of the notion of identity in our work.³² Aquino’s point is valid, as such insistence on the identity of difference runs the risk of pre-judgment (conscious or subconscious) and perhaps unwarranted division among feminist theologians whose overall theological goal is essentially the same thing. So while the purpose of social and political recognition, even when symbolized by an ‘ism’, speaks to the validity of overcoming subordination within the larger whole of society, it can jeopardize the path to that goal by creating a dynamic dialectic within our own ranks that supports unquestioned obedience to difference at the cost of the larger, however elusive, state of a just social order.

³⁰ Mary McClintock Fulkerson, *Changing the Subject: Women’s Discourses and Feminist Theology*, 4.

³¹ María Pilar Aquino, “Theology and Identity in the Context of Globalization”, 419.

³² Indeed, on a personal note, I have struggled to self-identify as any particular kind of feminist theologian. Am I neo/post-liberal, neo/post-colonial, or even neo/post-woman? I do mention that latter term with a hint of sarcasm.

While richness of diversity should be celebrated, and certainly reflects the variety of experiences and identities represented by feminist theologians, I believe Aquino's concern is that the fact of our differences becomes more significant than our shared vision of the future. As Shawn Copeland writes, "such confinement of difference renders understanding of an 'other' and her experience impossible. Consequently, some of the deepest concerns of some critical feminist theologians are disconnected from the concerns of other and different feminist theologians ... [therefore] an isolating relativism as well as a pernicious pluralism vitiates the ground for understanding, reflection and judgment; for evaluation, deliberation and praxis."³³ Clearly, while identity markers can give a voice to the oppressed, when social differences in academia become *the* focus of study—indeed come to form themselves as independent silos—the spotlight can veer away from valid theologically-driven justice initiatives.

Third, Aquino offers the reminder that the efforts of feminist theologians are really trying to create something new in order to work toward a just social order where women and children in particular are no longer marginalized, fighting for the crumbs of the world's resources.

Yet to do that effectively, our cognitive practices must be geared toward the discernment of ideologies and theologies as they function now in kyriarchal globalization. As she notes, "in the context of divided societies, in fact, theological

³³ M. Shawn Copeland, "Difference as a Category," in Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and M. Shawn Copeland (eds.), *Feminist Theology in Different Contexts* (London; Maryknoll, NY: SCM Press, 1996) 144.

activity functions and develops within disputed symbolic-political fields.”³⁴ If focus on the issue of theological sub-identities becomes the primary focus of research, the common space shared among feminist theologians becomes further fragmented. Or put another way: if feminist theologies focus more on the respective validity of identity-isms rather than theological initiatives for social change and viable solutions to oppression, the goal of *a new heaven and a new earth* continues to remain elusive.

Furthermore, if feminist theologians are overly-focused on self-identity, we also run the risk of not shedding enough light on the root causes of social dialectic and oppressive forces working against justice for women. Instead, I feel, such a phenomenon is merely accepted as a given—human behaviour that has always been and continues. Our respective identity markers become part of the dialectic.

Aquino notes further that if our collective aim is a new world of justice, “it is important that [intercultural] debates continue on the conceptual frameworks of feminist theological language in terms of their ethical-political relevance.”³⁵ Such an epistemology must proceed from a thorough understanding of the nature of the dialectic itself. If one proceeds from the assumption that biased thinking is cognitively homogeneous regardless of the object and outcome of oppressive actions, then perhaps we risk misunderstanding the real nature of the problem. This point is explored much further in the next two chapters. I have included this

³⁴ María Pilar Aquino, “Theology and Identity in the Context of Globalization”, 434.

³⁵ María Pilar Aquino, “Theology and Identity in the Context of Globalization”, 434.

point here as it offers a fairly accurate description of the overall state of feminist theology at the present time.

So it is from within this brief and general description of Christian feminism and feminist theology that I begin. While I try to avoid pigeon-holing particular brands of feminist theologies, I believe they can be described or referred to using commonly-held terminology within contextual theology.

That said, it is important to keep in mind that while a specific feminist theologian may characterize her brand of theology as, say, *liberal neo-Thomistic* or *postmodern liberation*, other woman theologians may self-refer as *radically feminist*, which can be perceived as antithetical, even heretical, to the Catholic and/or Christian faith. Indeed, there is not likely any other field of Catholic or Christian theology that represents such a plurality of voices.

In my opinion, this is one of the scholarly strengths of this field of theology as it represents the lived reality, languages, cultures, and various histories of its subject matter, as they relate to and are transformed by the Christian faith. Through adaptable and evolving methodologies, feminist theologians continue to provide scholarly commentary on the Church and women as they—the Church and women—relate to each other and on the ever-changing circumstances of the world around them.

I have selected three contemporary and predominant voices in the field of Catholic theological ethics in order to situate key notions that are foundational to a significant portion of feminist theological critical commentary on women's agency: Susan Ross, Margaret Farley and Lisa Sowle Cahill.

While all three are American and white, it is a safe conclusion that collectively their work speaks from a particular North American socio-historic context. None claim to speak for all women or from the perspective of a specific group of women (for example, as does M. Shawn Copeland's womanist theology or Ada Mariá Isasi-Díaz' mujerista theology). While their writings do not represent the wide range of pluralism in this area, they focus on my particular interest here: the solution of justice to a theological problem.

Furthermore, all three employ the notions of body, being, and intersubjectivity in assessing the problem of women's agency in the Church, which I will use as well. By body, I mean that physical corporeal reality of men's and women's bodies and the physical self-determination of one's bodily capabilities and functions including how personal meaning is derived from our individual bodies. I will use this term in the individual sense and in the communal sense, for example *women's bodies* and even in the sense of *the Body of Christ*. By being, I mean the essence of our personhood constituted by our human nature, spirituality, sexuality, consciousness, and the meaning of our inner selves that is derived through self-introspection. Finally, I refer to intersubjectivity as our individual relations with those with whom we exist temporally and spatially at all levels of society.

All three terms are fundamental notions within the contextual work of feminist Catholic theological anthropology. Yet, one question must be asked and answered from the outset: since these three notions are used within most feminist critical theories in the human sciences at large, what is specifically theological about their use by these Catholic feminist theologians? The short answer is that a

large number of Catholic feminist theologians measure these three notions against two overriding themes: relationality to God and grace.

So while magisterially-directed Catholic teaching insists on the normative anthropological model of male-female complementarity with respect to body, being, and intersubjectivity, with the *imago Dei* as the primary source of our relationality, Catholic feminist theologians critique that model through the lenses of inclusive mutuality, radical equality, and diversity.³⁶ Generally, this stream of Catholic feminist thought critiques the Church's complementarity model as too prescriptive, unnecessarily and harmfully dualistic, and biologically essentialist. Rather they often look to justice-based models that see women as having the freedom to be in relationship with God based on who they truly are and what they experience, where their bodies, beings, and relationships are recognized and nurtured through their personal relationship with Christ. Furthermore, they reposition the notion of *imago Dei* from an androcentric bias to one emphasizing the nature of God as not solely male; thus, women are then truly human beings made in the image and likeness of God.

Grace is a specific element of most critical theologies. However, it holds a prominent place within feminist theologies. Rosemary Radford Ruether points to the traditional Catholic notion of grace as a liberative and transcendent power, as well as a gift from God: "Grace is the authentic being of God made present to us in Christ's death and resurrection, which both liberates us from all the deformations of

³⁶ Susan Abraham and Elena Procario-Foley, *Frontiers in Catholic Feminist Theology: Shoulder to Shoulder* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009) 2-5.

our power and security grabbing and returns us to our deeper and authentic self and calling as God's good creation."³⁷

This is divine grace that transforms and comforts all those who are affected by oppressive forces and bias, and supports those who seek justice from distorted ideas and systems that harm and prevent the full humanity of women. And as Margaret Farley so notes, this kind of grace is not only offered to the objects of oppression, but those who carry it out, for it allows one to recognize "the contingencies of moral knowledge when we stretch toward the particular and the concrete [and] allows us to listen to the experience of others, take seriously reasons that are alternative to our own, to rethink our own last word,"³⁸ however divinely inspired we believe the word to be. Thus, for many feminist theologies, grace is that which transforms the oppressor and the oppressed.

2.2. The Catholic Feminist Theology of Susan Ross

2.2.1. Defining and Assessing the Problem

Susan Ross' theology speaks from the sacramental and liturgical perspectives, with a particular focus on the aesthetic experience of beauty, not only in sacramental or liturgical experiences but those of women's everyday lives. Admittedly, Ross writes from the perspective of a white, privileged, heterosexual, middle-class North American woman, noting that "I make no claim to

³⁷ Rosemary Radford Ruether, "The Possibilities of Creating Church," in Colleen Griffith (ed.), *Prophetic Witness: Catholic Women's Strategies for Reform* (Boston: Herder and Herder, 2009) 26.

³⁸ Margaret Farley, "Ethics, Ecclesiology and the Grace of Self-Doubt," in J. Walter, T. O'Connell and T. Shannon (Eds), *A Call to Fidelity – On the Moral Theology of Charles E. Curran* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2002) 69.

universality.”³⁹ However, she insists that a Catholic feminist theology of the body can and should appeal to the universal qualities common to all of humanity: our use of language and symbol, our desire for the good, our connection to the physical cosmos, and the cognitional processes of the human mind,⁴⁰ regardless of biological sex. She does not self-identify as a radical feminist theologian, such as Mary Daly, but credits Daly for her significant influence on her own feminist theology.⁴¹

I would characterize her as situated in the liberal feminist tradition within the postmodern context. She contends that theology as a whole has not only failed to address the importance of gender and the significance of human embodiment, but it has operated "out of an implicit, and sometimes quite explicit, set of conceptions that assumes an 'essential' and 'natural' quality to gender."⁴² Like many feminist theologians, she analyzes the dualisms associated with gender oppression (the soul/body, the sacred/secular, male/female, and the spiritual/material) through an appeal to the value of ambiguity, cultural and historical contexts, and women's experiences within those contexts.

Ross' theology is clearly derived from a grounding in the postmodern context "with its rejection of sure and unqualified foundations for human

³⁹ Susan Ross, *Anthropology: Seeing Light and Beauty* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2012) xvi.

⁴⁰ Ross makes more than a few direct references to the work of Bernard Lonergan throughout her book, *Anthropology: Seeing Light and Beauty*, specifically pages 132-134, 147.

⁴¹ Susan Ross, "Mary Daly exposed the slimy underbelly of religion's treatment of women", *National Catholic Reporter* December 5, 2016 accessed April 15, 2017, <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/mary-daly-exposed-slimy-underbelly-religions-treatment-women>.

⁴² Susan Ross, *Extravagant Affections* (New York: Continuum, 2001) 11.

knowledge”⁴³ and an emphasis on the significance of the multiple meanings of symbols and values. She acknowledges the human need to question and critique within a given context, especially value-laden questions that reflect the reality of women’s lives within the Church. She thereby skirts any notion that women are required to strive continually for an unreachable goal or standards:

How is it that a tradition, claiming to venerate the physical, material, and bodily, through its sacramentality, is so hostile to the reality of women’s bodies? How can Catholic women, who feel both nurtured and betrayed by their tradition, continue to worship?⁴⁴

She recognizes the importance of placing these questions within the framework of Western society’s clear rejection of fixed classicist notions of self, order, and society. And it is in this acknowledgement that Ross argues for the inherent ambiguity of all sacramentality, noting that collectively our society has lost the ability to transcend through symbolism. Indeed, she argues that while postmodernity can have nihilistic effects on self-identity and self-expression, with little appeal to permanency or hierarchy of values in society, the individualism characteristic of contemporary Western society encourages us to ask those critical questions of Christian theology and to challenge outdated (indeed harmful) traditions that relegate woman’s value and beauty away from the altar toward the nave of the church.

⁴³ Susan Ross, *Extravagant Affections*, 65.

⁴⁴ Susan Ross, *Extravagant Affections*, 10.

She points to four necessary criteria for a feminist sacramental theology.⁴⁵

The first is a tolerance and appreciation of ambiguity. Eschewing the quick fix of 'add women and stir,' particularly within traditional hierarchical institutions and their treatment of dualistic language and constructs, Ross maintains that the metaphysical, expressive, and moral dimensions of ambiguity serve to include the rich and varied experiences of women and men in sacramental life. In other words, the meaning of the human experience of sacraments *is* ambiguous and changes with our temporal and spatial location at any given moment of our participation the overall history of the Church. Also, I agree with Ross when she argues that the Christian tradition has unnecessarily constricted the "grace-filled" potential of the sacraments themselves.⁴⁶

Second, a feminist sacramental theology cannot disregard critical theories of the human body and gender. Ross argues that much of the Church's commentary on anthropology since Vatican II drew on cultural-anthropological studies from before the Council, such as the work of Mircea Eliade. Not to discount such studies, it is not redundant to point out that this focus of study did not take gender into account and reflects a clear androcentric bias. Furthermore, as the current Church language on biological complementarity shows, the work of the human and social sciences in this regard was not and is not considered. John Paul II's theology of the body (TOB) shows very little regard for late twentieth century

⁴⁵ Susan Ross, *Extravagant Affections*, chapter two, specifically 54-63.

⁴⁶ Susan Ross, *Extravagant Affections*, 13.

advances in social scientific thinking regarding the role of gender and sex in human life.

Third, critical understanding of theories of symbolic representation must be reflected in an adequate feminist sacramental theology given the importance of and influence that social constructions of gender and socio-historical cultural context have on representation and symbol throughout our lives. On this note, Ross appeals to the feminist hermeneutics of suspicion to inform Church construction and use of symbol and metaphor. She calls on Caroline Walker Bynum's work on the understanding of symbol and the Eucharist, as well as Rahner, Schillebeeckx, Gadamer, and Ricoeur, noting that any sacramental theology should take into account their work on symbol, metaphor, language, and hermeneutics, feminist or otherwise. The profundity of the meaning of symbol provided by their thinking provides a vast resource for the reinterpretation and re-situating of traditional Church symbols, and for the discovery of new symbols to enrich the sacraments.

Finally, Ross points out that the validity of a feminist sacramental theology should be judged on its work toward justice and overcoming oppression. Like liberation theology, a feminist sacramental theology emphasizes the importance of the connection between the sacraments and the notion of justice. She asks how a Christian Church can maintain its commitment to reconciliation, healing, and justice when it substantiates "the structural and theological obstacles it has placed in the

way of the full equality of women and men.”⁴⁷ How then can religious sacraments serve to move women toward full human flourishing when they do not recognize their full humanity?

In reading much of Ross’ earlier work, one notes that she does not provide an in-depth analysis of the causes of patriarchy. Yet throughout her work, she takes for granted the existence of patriarchal bias against women in the Church. While she points out where magisterial doctrine, the Code of Canon Law, and rules/practices based on two millennia of tradition have served to exclude women’s voices, presence, and leadership, she does not offer an analysis of the prejudice that causes it.

However, in *Anthropology: Seeking Light and Beauty*, Ross (2012) includes a fascinating and valuable chapter on the human capacity for evil. She frames her discussion solely in phenomenological terms, as in the evil that people choose to do given that we live in a state of original sin, even though its “ultimate source and meaning remains a profound mystery.”⁴⁸ Ross distinguishes between our state of original sin and human acts of evil, however, as the state of our lives cannot serve to excuse or justify truly evil acts. They are, rather, the horrifying result of decisive, pointed behaviour. More specifically, she defines evil as “a surd, a black hole, the complete absence of God,” referring to the examples of the Nazi Holocaust, American slavery, and more recently the Rwandan genocide, all of which she points out were committed by self-proclaimed Christians. This is not to say that evil

⁴⁷ Susan Ross, *Extravagant Affections*, 63.

⁴⁸ Susan Ross, *Anthropology: Seeing Light and Beauty*, 110.

is only perpetrated by Christians, but that baptized Christians can become consumed by evil action given particular circumstances.

What is useful about this discussion is that Ross appeals not only to notable theological thinkers such as Schleiermacher (transcendence through grace) and Girard (mimetic desire), but also recent studies from evolutionary biologists, neuroscientists, and archeologists concerning the motivations and causes of violence and evil actions and possible clues from human evolution. She concludes that “violent tendencies are, to some extent, part of our makeup as human beings...having evolved over millennia, but so did the human capacity to understand the effects and significance of violence and to resist it.”⁴⁹

What I find compelling is Ross’ argument that one cannot simply dismiss evildoers as psychopaths (although some may indeed be just that) or irredeemable despots, since the human phenomenon of evil is too complex and multi-layered. She notes that a 2004 Gallup Poll showed that 65 percent of US Catholics favour the death penalty despite Catholic teaching to the contrary.⁵⁰ Therefore, what is it that compels us, as Christians, to judge the humanity of the evildoer? To answer this question, Ross wants to probe the possible reasons for the action itself, to engage in thinking through the complexity of doing evil.

⁴⁹ Susan Ross, *Anthropology: Seeing Light and Beauty*, 113.

⁵⁰ Susan Ross, *Anthropology: Seeing Light and Beauty*, 116. Interestingly, as recent as 2013, the number of US Catholics in favour of the death penalty as a punishment for murder remains the same, at about 66%. See: Lydia Saad, “U.S. Death Penalty Support Stable at 63%”, Gallup, January 9, 2013, accessed April 9, 2017, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/159770/death-penalty-support-stable.aspx>

In doing so, she insists that evil action is contextual and historically conditioned. And when horrific atrocities such as the Rwandan massacres are studied, factors such as culture, social structures, and distinct personalities are significant and serve to explain the actions of the perpetrators, the victims, and those who are aware but are complicit in the silence. Recognizing such factors as common to these events helps us to ask questions concerning historical conditioning, human motivation, the use of rhetoric, exclusion, powerlessness, and most importantly, how Christians face and resist evil. This means, “refusing the ‘sound bite’ of our culture and being willing to ask what factors contribute to the evil situation’s sources and effects.”⁵¹ It also means, as Christians, not abrogating our obligation to resist it. As Ross reminds us: “Jesus calls us not to be passive doormats but rather to respond as creatively, if also as non-violently, as possible.”⁵²

Ross also discusses the result of evil, that of the effects of victim trauma. Referencing Rahner’s argument that every human has the capacity to exercise the fundamental option of freedom to respond to God’s call of operative grace, Ross notes that violent actions can blunt and even eradicate reason in a victim. As a survival or coping strategy in repeated violent behaviour, victims will often disassociate from the reality of their situation, in effect removing their conscious selves from the occurring trauma. We also know that violent behaviour (whether a single occurrence or repeated) can have the effect of severely warping the capacity

⁵¹ Susan Ross, *Anthropology: Seeing Light and Beauty*, 122.

⁵² Susan Ross, *Anthropology: Seeing Light and Beauty*, 131.

for reason in a victim, causing the victim to carry out unreasonable and sometimes evil action in the future (for example, the repeated cycle of sexual abuse in families).⁵³ Ross is pointing to an issue within the subject of dialectic that is not often pursued by feminist theologians, that of the role and response of the victim to oppression, an issue that requires further study, particularly regarding the phenomenon of *ressentiment* (which will be addressed further on).

In her critical analysis of Church patriarchy, Ross uses a deconstructivist method to illustrate how Church language and vernacular act as a bias against women and affect the sacramentality of women. While not the only Catholic feminist theologian to offer a deep critical analysis of Church language,⁵⁴ she specifically focuses on the common metaphors used in the teachings of the Church since Vatican II. She notes that despite the gains made by women in Europe and North America due to the work of the women's movement, the range of metaphors used to refer to women has narrowed considerably, focusing almost exclusively on spousal language that restricts women to receptors, servants, and passivity.⁵⁵ In

⁵³ There is much empirical literature to account for the cycle of sexual abuse (perpetration and revictimization). A few recent examples are: Jennie Noll, "Does Childhood Sexual Abuse Set in Motion a Cycle of Violence Against Women? : What We Know and What We Need to Learn" *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 20:4 (2005): 455-462; Marianne Lau and Ellids Kristensen, "Sexual Revictimization in a Clinical Sample of Women Reporting Childhood Sexual Abuse," *Nordic Journal of Psychiatry* 64:1 (2010): 4-10; Gail Hornor, "Child Sexual Abuse: Consequences and Implications", *Journal of Pediatric Health Care*, 24:6 (2010): 358-364.

⁵⁴ For earlier studies in this area, now considered foundational texts within the field of Christian feminist theology, see Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-talk* (Boston, Beacon Press: 1983) particularly chapter 2; Sandra Schneiders, *Women and the Word: The Gender of God in the New Testament and the Spirituality of Women* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986); Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroads, 1992); and, Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Boston, Beacon Press: 1995).

⁵⁵ Susan Ross, *Extravagant Affections*, 110-115.

her judgment, John Paul II's TOB is probably the most telling example of the use of spousal language to the detriment of women in the modern-day Church.⁵⁶

Given the varied realities, constitution, and experiences of most families in Europe and North America in the present day, Ross proposes *family* as an alternative term, an all-inclusive symbol to re-image the Church in the world and within the lives of its members. For example, a familial perspective that focuses on embodiment includes notions of interdependence, responsibility, and the dynamics and challenges inherent in any family. Such revised language allows Ross to make the strong link between Church liturgy and the ethics of the person, taking the traditional and normative Church teaching on gender (characterized by Church teaching as biological, functional, and essentialist) toward an ethics that brings sacramentality into all aspects of everyday life and not solely within the realm of Church life.

Another aspect of Ross' feminist theology that I appreciate is how she situates early liberation theology within a feminist context, specifically her criticism of liberation theology's focus on social justice goals to counter economic and racial oppression to the exclusion of the sinfulness of institutionalized sexism and its dehumanizing effects on economies and racial stereotyping.⁵⁷ Although she argues that liberation theologies are by their very nature sacramental in focus (e.g., the

⁵⁶ In particular, see two teachings by John Paul II: *On the Family: Apostolic Exhortation, Familiaris Consortio, of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to the Episcopate, to the Clergy and to the Faithful of the Whole Catholic Church Regarding the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World*. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1982), and, *On the Dignity and Vocation of Women on the Occasion of the Marian Year: Apostolic Letter, Mulieris Dignitatem, of His Holiness Pope John Paul II*. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1988).

⁵⁷ Susan Ross, *Extravagant Affections*, 176-177.

symbolism of the Eucharist for the hungry and the poor), until recently they assumed that women's sacramental experience is the same as men's. Citing María Pilar Aquino and Ada Mariá Isasi-Díaz (and others), she reminds us that women's presence in sacramental events not only adds to the overall experience, but *transforms* them. Thus, women's presence in sacramental events should not be taken for granted.⁵⁸

2.2.2. Ross' Response to Patriarchal Bias

In terms of theological praxis, Ross points directly to the nature of sacramentality to reveal the traditional and practical bias in the Church's sacraments, and to the nature of the sacramental experiences of women to offset this institutionalized patriarchal bias against them: "Thus, for feminist theology, the question of authentic worship can only come *after* critical reflection, not only on the experience, but on the history and theology of the sacraments as well."⁵⁹

Although the Church insists that baptized women are full members of the Body of Christ, half that body is excluded as incapable of receiving holy orders, of presiding over the Eucharist, and of mediating God's healing grace in reconciliation and anointing. Those women who remain in the Church, but experience ongoing exclusion precisely because of their sex, find other ways to experience more fully their sacramental lives, which amounts to much more than weekly communion as the sacramental life spills out into the community, the family, and the workplace where God's beauty and presence is seen to be ever present in their whole lives.

⁵⁸ Susan Ross, *Extravagant Affections*, 176-177.

⁵⁹ Susan Ross, *Extravagant Affections*, 204.

Ross argues that the sacraments then take on a new life, involving ambiguity and creativity shared among the women who practice them. This, then, speaks theologically to the evolving and re-imagined essence of the relationship between women and sacramentality, one that deserves more theological attention and analysis.

The crux of Ross' response to Church patriarchy in terms of sacramentality is a call to reform precisely due to the fact that "the gospel message is radically inclusive, non-hierarchical, and directed against oppressive structures; that women as well as men have been shapers of the tradition; and that the call to reform Church structures of their sexism challenges women and men to re-envision the symbolic expressions of their faith."⁶⁰

2.3. The Catholic Feminist Theology of Margaret Farley

2.3.1. Defining and Assessing the Problem

Like most other Christian feminist theologians,⁶¹ Margaret Farley is critical of the lack of full agency for women in the Christian Church. Indeed, much of her recent work focused on human sexual ethics, including the subtopics of homosexuality, birth control, masturbation, and intersexuality. It is important to note, however, that Farley is precise concerning the context of her critical analysis: rarely does she apply analysis to specific Church doctrine or teachings, but rather

⁶⁰ Susan Ross, "God's Embodiment and Women," in Catherine Lowry LaCugna (ed.), *Freeing Theology* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993) 198.

⁶¹ Most Christian theologians who self-identify as feminist scholars comprise this group, however I would deliberately include Charles Curran, Robert Doran, James Keenan and Charles Hefling for two reasons: all four have included feminist analyses (or at the very least feminist considerations) in their work and secondly, all share a vision of what human living ought to be that does not include patriarchal systems of living or thought but are founded on complete human inclusivity.

she frames her discussion within Christianity as a whole and within the ecumenical Christian Church.

Nonetheless, she makes reference to historical facts regarding official Church documents and responses on sexual matters of the faithful (or lack thereof in the case of the Church's overall response to the pedophilia scandal of recent years). For example, in a chapter of *Vatican Authority and American Catholic Dissent: The Curran Case and Its Consequences*, Farley writes that there is an important role for public discourse on moral matters that the magisterium deems irrefutable:

The conclusion that I have reached...does not in itself prejudice fundamental questions of ecclesiology. It rules neither in or out the possibility of a strong centralized teaching authority; it neither affirms nor denies the need for an official church teaching on fundamental moral matters or an official position on controversial questions. What it does is rule out the strategy of silencing diverse voices. Indeed, one might argue that, paradoxically, the greater the centralization of teaching authority in the church, the greater the need for arenas and structures whereby all voices in the church can be heard...public moral discourse is necessary in order to avoid unjust injury to persons and groups.⁶²

In all of her work, Farley is careful not to call out the Catholic Church directly on any one particular teaching, although she clearly shares and promotes a vision of a completely inclusive Christian family. Nevertheless, despite her belief in the value of public moral discourse on Church teaching, her 2006 book *Just Love: A*

⁶² This chapter, "Moral Discourse in the Public Arena", originally appeared in William W. May (ed.), *Vatican Authority and American Catholic Dissent: The Curran Case and Its Consequences* (New York: Crossroad, 1987) but was subsequently published by Farley in *Changing the Questions: Explorations in Christian Ethics*, Jamie Manson (ed.) (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2015) quote from 81.

*Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics*⁶³ drew condemnation from the magisterium albeit several years after its publication. In 2012, the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF) issued a notification that Farley's book ignores and contradicts official Catholic teaching, particularly in the areas of masturbation, homosexuality, and divorce, stating that,

Sr. Farley also manifests a defective understanding of the objective nature of the natural moral law, choosing instead to argue on the basis of conclusions selected from certain philosophical currents or from her own understanding of 'contemporary experience'...the above-mentioned book contained erroneous propositions, the dissemination of which risks grave harm to the faithful. This approach is not consistent with authentic Catholic theology.⁶⁴

While it is not my intent at this point to detail or assess the facts of this event that concerns one particular selection among her overall body of work, the incident, or more specifically the CDF's response to the book, is a valid example of the dialectic between the classicist nature and outlook of traditional Church teaching and the challenges of our postmodern world concerning moral discourse. In this regard, the framework for sexual ethics as elucidated in *Just Love*, is well situated for application to postmodern sexual values that affect all adult bodies, beings, and interrelationality. As Farley noted more recently: "Only if we are open to new meanings for the past can we risk flexibility in our expectations of the future."

⁶³ Margaret Farley, *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 2006).

⁶⁴ Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, *Notification on the Book Just Love. A Framework for the Christian Sexual Ethics by Sr Margaret A. Farley, R.S.M.* [March 30, 2012], accessed March 10, 2017, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20120330_nota-farley_en.html

Without [it] we cannot sustain hope...unless we are open to new meanings in the future, there can be no real future; there is only the past."⁶⁵

Yet how does Farley define the problem of patriarchy in the Christian Church? To answer this question, one must look to how she defines Christian feminist ethics, that being a critical reflection on the "past theological justifications of the inferiority of women to men."⁶⁶ Such ethical criticism also contests imagery that relates women to evil or the 'fall of man,' as well as dualisms that assign particular characteristics to both sexes such as activity/passivity, mind/body, reason/emotion, etc. Farley notes that this body of critical theory looks to the establishment of justice and full human flourishing not characterized by gender difference. For her, human flourishing on the individual level is personal and cannot be envisioned without the inclusion of the sexual self: "The possibilities for human flourishing in general are nurtured or hindered by the ways in which we live our sexual lives."⁶⁷

Like Ross, Farley does not provide a detailed analysis of bias. She offers a realistic and almost gentle, caring account of the human ways of seeing that prevent love from entering into relationships or serve to stultify them altogether; she calls these *pinched* ways of seeing:

⁶⁵ Margaret Farley, *Personal Commitments: Beginning, Keeping, Changing* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2013).

⁶⁶ Margaret Farley, "Feminist Ethics," in James Childress and John Macquarrie (eds.), *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986) 229-231.

⁶⁷ Margaret Farley, *Just Love*, xi.

There are ways of looking at another (at human persons or at God, at human communities or enterprises) that prevent love and that render us absent from our commitments. We may focus only on what we hate in another, what has always produced resentment in us. We may also look upon what we love with a 'suspicious stare,' the analytic and judging look which slowly drains for us the meaning from a project or the beauty from a person...who sees only the absurdity of an external shell in what we view...[these are] the obstacles of our self-preoccupation, our irrational fears and desires, our easy indifference, our cultural blindness.⁶⁸

Love, indeed, is the cornerstone of Farley's theological ethics as a whole and more specifically of her notion of interrelationality. As she wryly notes: "Love is not the solution, it's the problem."⁶⁹ By this she does not mean that love is a problem in and of itself, but rather the challenge is knowing how to love well. The will to love may be innate in humans, but the more important reflection has to do with "knowing what to love and how to love... then our normative question in ethics is going to be, what is a right love?"⁷⁰

For Farley, this is an epistemological question when positing an understanding of love, as she believes we can certainly know and must know what the object of our love is. Since we ought to know what we love, love also must have to do with justice, which is another overriding theme in her work:

Part of our moral task is to discern as best we can what it is we are loving—its beauty, its needs, its potential, its limitations. A just love, then, includes loving persons in a way that takes account of what it means to be a person—not ignoring, for example, the fact that persons have a capacity for free choice.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Margaret Farley, *Personal Commitments*, 71.

⁶⁹ Margaret Farley, "An Ethics for Same-Sex Relations," in Robert Nugent (ed.), *A Challenge to Love: Gay and Lesbian Catholics in the Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 100.

⁷⁰ Margaret Farley, "Love, Justice, and Discernment: An Interview with Margaret A. Farley," *Second Opinion* 17:2 (1991): 80-91.

⁷¹ Margaret Farley, "Love, Justice, and Discernment: An Interview with Margaret A. Farley," 80-91.

This account explains why human experience is so crucial to Farley's theology, indeed as a key source that constitutes one of the three overriding themes of her overall Christian feminist ethic. She is emphatic that a just love requires the identification, respect, and preservation of the lover as well as the beloved. To discount or not include the experience of authentic human loving, or expect it to fit within an unchanging normative mold, is to disrespect the act and object of love.

Human experience then, must be considered in a feminist ethic as it anchors human interrelationality. As Farley notes, respect and love are activities, something we *do* and not just something we *feel* interiorly. Loving, in particular, consists of three activities regardless of the object of one's love: affective affirmation (affirming the object's existence and well-being), affective union (not just desire or longing for someone we love, but to be joined with them lovingly), and affective response (love as a response to the object's value, beauty, and dignity).⁷² Therefore, the human experience of loving, based on respect, is actively inter-relational and one that cannot be omitted in a Christian account of ethics.⁷³

She does point out, however, that in terms of a Christian feminist ethic, three questions must be explored: What sort of epistemological evidence does experience provide? Is universalization of human experience possible? and What weight do we attribute to human experience in relation to that of scripture, tradition,

⁷² Margaret Farley, *Personal Commitments* 38-40.

⁷³ Margaret Farley, "The Role of Experience in Moral Discernment," in Lisa Sowle Cahill and James F. Childress (eds.), *Christian Ethics: Problems and Prospects* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1996) 134-51.

and other sources of moral knowledge such as that found in the human sciences?⁷⁴

Farley explains that, in addressing these questions, the exploration gives way to guiding criteria for moral discernment. Nonetheless, she argues strongly that personal experience is authoritative in relation to the other three sources of Christian ethics. Such authority and weight certainly situate the possible reasons why the Catholic teaching on womanhood is so poorly received in North America, given the lack of inclusion and dismissal of the importance of women's experiences.⁷⁵

A second theme of Farley's theology concerns the notion of being. She insists on the necessary and unconditional value of persons where self-meaning is

⁷⁴ Margaret Farley, "Moral Discourse in the Public Arena", in *Changing the Questions: Explorations in Christian Ethics*, Jamie Manson (ed.). (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2015) 62-66.

⁷⁵ As John Paul II noted in *Mulieris dignitatem* (1988 Apostolic Letter that solidified the Church's contemporary teaching on womanhood, leading to its preference and emphasis for biologically-based gendered complementarity), there are only two ways for a woman to be: through full marriage to a man without the use of birth control (the bodily marriage) or marriage to God (the spiritual marriage of virginity), both of which can be described as self-giving, outward in focus and effectuating self-fulfillment only through the care of others such that "women can discover the entire meaning of their femininity and thus be disposed to making a 'sincere gift of self' to others, thereby finding themselves." [MD 31] The essence of her personhood is only discovered through her familial relationships and biological predisposition, regardless of the variety of relationships and experiences throughout her life and the meaning she derives from them as they relate to her whole being and existence – including but not limited to her profession, her friendships, her successes and failures outside of the home. John Paul II, *Apostolic Letter "Mulieris dignitatem" on the Dignity and Vocation of Women on the Occasion of the Marian Year* [Aug. 15, 1988]. My point is simply that this is not the profile of self-identity or self-fulfillment held by the large majority Catholic women in the west. While many women have purposely chosen to live their lives within the confines of this teaching (and should have the choice to do so), it would seem that such a mode of being is unattainable and unrealistic for millions of Catholic women, which speaks to the very limited level of reception of this teaching overall. In the United States, Gallup's 2014 *Values and Beliefs* survey indicated that 86% of American Catholics believe it is "morally acceptable" to use birth control, 72% are in favour of sex outside of marriage, and a strong majority of 70% endorse gay and lesbian relationships. See Frank Bruni, "Be Fruitful, Not Bananas: Pope Francis, Birth Control and American Catholics," *The New York Times*, January 24, 2015. Such rates are even higher for Catholics in Canada and South American countries.

infinite and where the conditions for the exploration and development of personal freedom are permitted to exist. And this is the key to her ethical framework. Since we are intersubjective beings at all levels of living, in order to address alterity or otherness, we must begin with the self as subject. Farley recognizes that self-transcendence cannot occur without self-recognition of the truth of one's personhood, which is directly manifested in our relations with others. One's freedom for self-love and to love others (the intersubjective nature of human love) is based on the absence of unjust restraints on one's being.

Farley argues that if we cannot love freely (in the sense of freely choosing the object of our love) and in an unencumbered manner those things and people that hold sacred meaning in our lives (including God), we simply cannot transcend ourselves to attain the right, the good, and the true in our overall existence as well as our relationships: "The self-transcendence that Christians associate with what it means to be a human person pertains to ourselves not just as spirits but as bodies."⁷⁶ And a key part of our embodied and spirited self is our sexuality, which cannot and should not be defined prescriptively given the existence of intersexuality, homosexuality, heterosexuality, and transgenderism. As such, gender most certainly matters.⁷⁷

The point is that deciding and acting on what or who to love in a just manner are acts of the rational self, regardless of the sexuality of that self. Self-transcendence is also a transformation of consciousness, "which illumines both the

⁷⁶ Margaret Farley, *Just Love*, 117-118.

⁷⁷ Margaret Farley, *Just Love*, 151-155.

meaning and frequent inefficacy of obligation,”⁷⁸ particularly to that which is founded on a normative, unchanging dogma that holds up deontology before freedom and responsibility of the self.

A third theme of Farley’s theology is the notion of justice, which forms the foundation for her response to patriarchy as a type of oppression.

2.3.2. Farley’s Response to Patriarchy: Just Love

Margaret Farley does not attempt to analyze or deconstruct the Catholic teachings on womanhood, sexuality, or the body. While she often draws from other feminist theologians who critique Church teaching including Elizabeth Johnson, Lisa Sowle Cahill, and Rosemary Radford Ruether, as well other moral theologians such as Charles Curran, James Gustafson, and Richard McCormick, she does not directly address Church patriarchy in and of itself. Rather, her justice framework for Christian sexual ethics, which she calls *Just Love*, is one that she presents as having applicability within a Christian ethic as well as a secular one.

At the outset, she notes that she has “taken seriously the role of social and cultural construction in all of our understandings of body, gender and sexuality.”⁷⁹ She argues that questions of sexual ethics are asked within every generation and those being asked now within philosophy and theology are characterized by a strong and ongoing dialectic between tradition and modern enlightenment brought

⁷⁸ James Marsh, *Lonergan in the World: Self-Absorption, Otherness, and Justice* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014) 54.

⁷⁹ Margaret Farley, *Just Love*, xii.

about now mainly by the advances made in the last century by human liberation movements in the West.

The framework of *Just Love* is built on four pillars that link Christian love and the notion of justice for personal relationships and those on which society is built: historical situation; the importance of cross-cultural difference; the various meanings of human experience of embodiment, gender, and sexuality; and the methods by which questions of sexual ethics can be addressed. In outlining the elements of this foundation, Farley insists that four sources exist for any Christian ethic, to which most Christian ethicists appeal: scripture, tradition of the faith, secular disciplines of knowledge (e.g., medicine, anthropology, even art and literature), and contemporary human experience. She is careful to point out that for some ethicists, one type of source may hold more weight than another, but all require tested methods for correlation and application to address challenges they present. They are not merely sources of information that can be included unsystematically or indiscriminately in theological research. As such, her insistence on verifiable methodology is appealing for my purposes in this study.

From these sources, Farley bases much of her approach to theological ethics on the idea that justice is the chief principle and condition for morally human behaviour, specifically human love guided by sexual ethics. By justice, she means the more traditional, formal meaning of “to render to each his or her due,” arguing that without a basis in this notion, there cannot exist a worthy love (self-love or intersubjective love); otherwise love becomes sentimentalized and subject to distortion. Furthermore, justice must be based on the formal ethical principles that

“persons and groups of persons ought to be affirmed according to their concrete reality actual and potential.”⁸⁰

Her approach to human sexuality is comprehensive, liberal, and reflects the postmodern nature of Western cultures. Farley arrives at her framework for sexual ethics via the questions that have perennially challenged contemporary Christian sexual ethics: the moral significance of the body, the extent to which gendered being matters, and the sources and aims of sexual desire. For example, she asks what kind of person one should be in order to love justly. In trying to situate these questions in the current North American social context, she incorporates a normative account of human sexual ethics that reflects the diverse experiences of human sexuality: male, female, and hetero/homo/trans/intersexual. This not only allows her to speak to various human experiences but, and perhaps more importantly, allows her justice-based framework to include the substantive meaning of the varied nature of human sexuality, which includes the significance of healthy human development and adult flourishing.

Thus, her approach to ethics takes account of the realms of meaning that arise from a broad spectrum of human sexuality, particularly those that account for the authenticity of the subject and object. As she notes, the right, the good, and the true are benchmarks for any human sexual ethic: “a love is right and good insofar as it aims to affirm truthfully the concrete reality of the beloved.” Thus, love that

⁸⁰ Margaret Farley, *Just Love* 209.

does not reflect one's true selfhood, one's body and one's authentic relationships, is repressive and harmful.

While space here does not permit a full explanation of Farley's framework, I offer the following snapshot (Table 1) as an overview.

Table 1: Farley's Norms for Sexual Justice

Basis (obligating features of personhood)	Norm
Respect for the autonomy and relationality that characterize persons as ends in themselves, and hence respect for their well-being.	1. Do no unjust harm (physical, psychological, spiritual or relational)
Respect for autonomy.	2. Free consent of partners
Respect for relationality.	3. Mutuality 4. Equality 5. Commitment 6. Fruitfulness
Respect for persons as sexual beings in society.	7. Social Justice

With this framework, Farley wishes to appeal to the concrete reality of human living as it is and as it can be: as human beings with physical, relational, and existential needs; a capacity for free choice; and the ability to think and feel, that takes into account their spacio-temporal location but does not appeal to complete self-identity within systems and institutions.

This ethics places more weight on the criteria of human reality and persons as ends in themselves, not means, where self-determination is a required element for determining the meaning in our lives toward self-flourishing. In this respect, one could say it is universal as it calls out to the human condition that we all share. But this framework is also specific as it emphasizes self and mutually fulfilling sexuality. As I previously mentioned, that while Farley does not critique specific Church teachings, there are two special considerations within her framework that are clearly contrary to Church teaching concerning masturbation and homosexual genital actions. Both, she notes, are included in her framework. Regarding the former, Farley notes:

Perhaps the most important insight we need in this regard is that it, like other sexual activities, needs to be moved out of the realm of taboo morality...[T]he norms of justice as I have presented them would seem to apply to the choice of sexual self-pleasuring only insofar as this activity may help or harm, only insofar as it supports or limits, well-being and liberty of spirit.⁸¹

Her stance on homosexual activity and same-sex relationships is also held to the same standard: “The justice ethic appropriate to heterosexual relationships is the same justice ethic appropriate to same-sex relationships...an ethic for Christian—and perhaps all human—sexual relationships.”⁸² In elucidating both these arguments, Farley includes her scrupulous data from the four sources cited, above allowing her to render a critical, balanced, and well-founded judgment on the normalcy of these two types of sexual activity.

⁸¹ Margaret Farley, *Just Love*, 235-236.

⁸² Margaret Farley, *Just Love*, 288.

2.4. The Catholic Feminist Theology of Lisa Sowle Cahill

2.4.1. Defining and Assessing the Problem

In her 2014 plenary address to the Society of Christian Ethics (SCE), Lisa Sowle Cahill offered a valuable summary of the three prominent frameworks for theology in the Catholic Church in the post-Vatican II period:

- the *Augustinian* (e.g., von Balthazar, Ratzinger, and de Lubac);
- the *neo-Thomistic* (e.g., Rahner, Chenu, and Congar);⁸³ and
- the *neo-Franciscan* (e.g., Pinckers and, although Protestant, Hauerwas).

Each has a distinct way of viewing the Church, its tradition, and its engagement in theological discourse. Cahill rightly notes that each of the three theological strands overlap concerning certain issues and approaches, but they also address feminist concerns.⁸⁴ Cahill also cites a fourth stream that embraces more radical approaches to the Catholic theological tradition, including Latina, womanist, African, and Asian ethics of gender. She calls this the *Junian* stream in reference to the female apostle in Romans 16:7.⁸⁵ Thus, the “Catholic tradition is internally

⁸³ While some may dispute Rahner, Chenu and Congar being classified as neo-Thomists, these are the specific examples that Cahill offered in the written text of this address to the 2014 SCE.

⁸⁴ Lisa Sowle Cahill, “Catholic Feminists and Traditions: Renewal, Reinvention, Replacement” *Plenary Address to the Society of Christian Ethics*. Seattle, Washington, January 9, 2014. Copy provided by Cahill.

⁸⁵ Romans 16:7 (NAB): “Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives and fellow prisoners; they are prominent among the apostles and they were in Christ before me.” According to biblical scholar Joseph A. Fitzmyer, the reference to Junia (‘Iounian’ in Greek) could clearly infer a woman’s name; indeed the Vulgate and Bohairic read ‘Junia’, as in the feminine meaning. As to her status as an apostle, it could mean that she (along with Andronicus) enjoyed the esteem of the apostles or that they were actually apostles as the title was given to those who were outside of the twelve at that time. See Fitzmyer, “Commentary on the Letter to the Romans”, in Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Roland E. Murphy (Eds.) *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (London: Prentice Hall, 2011) 868. Furthermore, feminist biblical scholar Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza reminds us that it is very unlikely that Junia is a shortened form of the male name *Junianus* since Junia was a common female Roman name and was also noted as such by patristic exegetes. See Schüssler

diverse and constituted by plural traditions.”⁸⁶ I find it a very useful reminder of the necessity to situate Catholic feminist theologies in this manner, as rising out of the many traditions and contemporary critical perspectives within the Church, represented by a polymorphic range of voices in Catholic ethical scholarship.

Indeed, such frameworks serve to teach new theologians and furthermore remind us all of the multiplicity of methods and theological thought that truly reflects the range of faith and understanding within the Body of Christ. As Cahill writes: “the Catholic tradition references a centralized magisterium. Nevertheless, Catholicism is internally pluralistic...a constellation of commitments.”⁸⁷ Cahill herself identifies with a feminist critical realist sex and gender ethics, based on the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition of reflection on human flourishing. She has a firmly established commitment to the natural law tradition that grounds Church teaching, where reason and faith can flourish with objective truths informed by experience. In *Sex, Gender and Christian Ethics*,⁸⁸ she appeals to the importance and social reality of human sexuality as the starting point for intra- and cross-cultural dialogue, insisting that through the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition it is possible to establish shared and substantive moral values which can be agreed upon dialogically, based on shared human experience, for instance through marriage and parenthood.

Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her* (New York: Crossroad, 1994.) 47-48, 172. For a complete exegesis, see Eldon Jay Epp, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005) in which he carries out a thorough and detailed textual-critical exegesis concluding that “it remains a fact that there was a woman apostle, explicitly so named, in the earliest generation of Christianity, and contemporary Christians — lay and clergy — must (and eventually will) face up to it.” 81.

⁸⁶ Lisa Sowle Cahill, “Catholic Feminists and Traditions,” 3.

⁸⁷ Lisa Sowle Cahill, “Catholic Feminists and Traditions,” 1 (abstract note).

⁸⁸ Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Sex, Gender and Christian Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

She notes that without an appeal to shared human experience, whatever that may be, radical deconstruction of moral foundations within a critical theory approach can only produce a moral vacuum of cultural relativism, preventing or at least hindering meaningful dialogue. Thus, despite the plurality of cultural, social, and historical factors that shape human existence, Cahill insists that we can find common ground in which to assess and judge moral behaviour.

Moreover, Cahill effectively argues that such factors cannot form the basis of a Christian sexual ethic; that while such themes as sex as pleasure, the priority of equality and freedom, and certainly self-determination have been very “effective in addressing the human suffering caused by legacies of negativity and even oppression concerning sex...these themes will not be adequate to the task of shaping a positive ethic of sex and gender for the future.”⁸⁹ The overriding goal of any Christian sexual ethic, she notes, is “to imbue sexual and reproductive behaviour with the qualities of respect, empathy, reciprocity, and mutual fidelity which would allow sexual and parental love to be transforming agents in society in general.”⁹⁰ Furthermore, feminist theologies are a distinct set of theories, but she notes that like all liberation theologies, they are praxis ethics. Their practitioners are “not afraid to be critical, judgmental, persuasive, interventionist, and even coercive.”⁹¹

⁸⁹ Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Sex, Gender and Christian Ethics*, 10.

⁹⁰ Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Sex, Gender and Christian Ethics*, 119.

⁹¹ Lisa Sowle Cahill, “Feminist Ethics, Differences, and Common Ground: A Catholic Perspective”, in Charles Curran, et.al. (eds.), *Feminist Ethic and the Catholic Moral Tradition* (Mahwah, NY: Paulist Press, 1996) 185.

Cahill also addresses conservative Catholic views of feminism in her treatment of postmodern values such as self-determination and the emphasis on personal choice (within North American culture). Overall, her critical approach to sexual values and women's determinacy reflects a reasonable balance between the postmodern notions of self-determination in terms of body, being, and interrelationality, and the Christian Thomistic tradition that places importance on the value of shared human experiences.

In terms of the notions of body, being, and interrelationality, Cahill treats the three as intrinsically linked. As such, one cannot speak about the body without speaking about its interaction with other bodies:

Hence, to speak of the body, means on the one side to stand up against moralities which take for granted a physical body which can 'determine' social roles as norm and rule preceding them; and, on the other to take up the question of social relationships (especially gender relationships) from the standpoint of human concreteness and presence.⁹²

Through embodiment (in which we have our individuality and selfhood of intellect, will, emotions, and spirituality), says Cahill, we experience the material conditions in and of social living to appropriate the meaning of human quality in order to know, feel, and self-transcend. Furthermore, Cahill argues, it is through socialization of the body that we have cultural variation of that overall meaning. Thus, through analysis of the body and bodily roles, one is able to proceed with moral and

⁹² Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Sex, Gender and Christian Ethics*, 76.

intercultural analysis of cultural variations *and* commonalities regarding human living.

Cahill is careful to qualify this approach to human embodiment, however. She cautions that any such analysis must be thorough in considering two factors. First, in order to avoid cultural imperialism from the search for commonalities or universalities in women's overall experience, cultural contexts of women must be carefully considered.

As such, similarity in experience cannot be presupposed. To do so risks moral relativity: "for white academic feminists, 'difference' often takes on a more epistemologically revolutionary character, in which the possibility of shared understandings of experience among cultures, and therefore also judgment of justice and injustice, are explicitly relativized."⁹³

Cahill notes that this becomes particularly problematic for Christian feminists who hold up the value of plurality, stemming from the importance of individual freedom, as ultimate.⁹⁴ Echoing Charles Taylor, she argues that when autonomy is treated as a given or a priority over other moral values such as honesty and commitment, the immorality of unjust behaviour can only be measured against the relative autonomy of the affected person or group.⁹⁵

Nonetheless, a social ethics, particularly one focused on sexuality and gender, cannot proceed without some assumption of a fundamentally shared moral

⁹³ Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Sex, Gender and Christian Ethics*, 27.

⁹⁴ Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Sex, Gender and Christian Ethics*, 218.

⁹⁵ Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Sex, Gender and Christian Ethics*, 140-141.

vision based on some notion of shared humanity. Cahill looks to Aquinas and the Catholic tradition of natural law for that understanding of shared humanity.

2.4.2. Cahill's Response to Patriarchy

Like Susan Ross, Cahill does not directly propose an analysis of patriarchy or biased oppression. She is more concerned with the method of determining what an appropriate and useful ethical construct should be and how one goes about the business of the discourse of sexual ethics that commits to “equality, to intercultural discernment of real goods and evils, and to the human and moral interdependence of sexual desire and pleasure, sexual commitment and responsible parenthood.”⁹⁶

While she contends that the contemporary themes of Christian sexual ethics have been effective in countering human suffering as the direct result of sexual and gender oppression (such as the importance of sex for pleasure, the interrelationality of sex, and gender equality and freedom as necessary elements in a Christian sexual ethic), she raises two valid concerns. First, in the feminist efforts to focus on the importance of sexual pleasure, which has not been adequately addressed prior to the last half of the 20th century, Cahill expresses concern that such a focus overrides the social meanings of women's bodies in terms of parenthood and kinship.

Second, Cahill insists that such themes do not do justice to the necessity of personal and social responsibility for sexual relations, and has been replaced with mutual consent as the guiding norm in liberal democratic societies. In fact, I would

⁹⁶ Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Sex, Gender and Christian Ethics*, 3.

argue that is even more the case since Cahill argued this in her 1996 book: *Sex, Gender and Christian Ethics*. She insists that “freedom from traditional repressions needs to be translated into an ethic of meaning, purpose, and even discipline which can meet cultural trivializations and distortions of sex.”⁹⁷ Her premise is that a valid discourse on sex and gender justice must be able to speak and listen to multiple moral traditions within and outside of its own culture.

Cahill attempts to do this by first offering a foundation for such a construct, built on the trilateral relation of body, personhood, and social institutions. One must first allow for the fact that the human body is relatively invariant over time. Next, one must also allow for the influence that cultural institutions have over bodily experience, for example marriage laws and incest taboos. Third, one must take a critical and normative stance, which means precisely that one should question whether “the cross-cultural social relations which have been realized historically are in fact implied by the human body (the person as embodied), or by embodied individuals who begin, survive, and flourish socially.”⁹⁸

This necessarily involves critiquing the extent that established systems of one’s society promote or deny human flourishing to all members of society, for example, gender, sexual orientation, or even scholars engaged in the process of analysis and critique. This is precisely where Cahill looks to retrieve certain aspects of the Catholic tradition of Aristotelian-Thomistic natural law theory and integrate them with a feminist analysis of issues such as sexuality and gender as

⁹⁷ Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Sex, Gender and Christian Ethics* 11.

⁹⁸ Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Sex, Gender and Christian Ethics* 79-80.

placed within an appropriate historically conscious context. She explains her reasoning here:

A basic fact about moral agency: individuals are always embedded in historical, cultural and social collectivities, networks, and patterns of action. The 'aggregated agency' and 'currents of action' in which we participate sometimes dilute or diminish the results of our personal decisions. Yet they also give our decisions power to reach across time and space, affecting an indefinite number of other people and social realities. The traditional principles of moral theology (such as double effect, direct and indirect intention, and cooperation) are not adequate to define what moral responsibility requires in the face of these new or at least newly recognized developments...To understand what 'incentives and pressures' social agents are likely to produce or reinforce by their policies and behavior requires data from the social sciences, for example.⁹⁹

In doing so herself, Cahill references psychology, sociology, linguistics, biology and history, just to name a few disciplines. And in integrating the two systems of thought (Thomist ethics and postmodern feminism), Cahill looks to Aquinas' ethics of natural law for his defence of moral reasoning as practical and contextual, not that which is applied in a manualist approach to ethical absolutes, despite Thomas' insistence on women's subordinate status due to their passivity in relation to men.¹⁰⁰ She argues that such transcendental Thomistic notions as the human freedom and will to self-transcend can strongly authenticate the feminist insistence on the full agency of women.¹⁰¹ Again, she retrieves specific themes and

⁹⁹ Lisa Sowle Cahill, quoted in: John A. Coleman, "The Call of the Catholic Citizen," *America: The National Catholic Review*, November 1, 2010, accessed January 23, 2017, <http://americamagazine.org/issue/753/100/call-catholic-citizen>

¹⁰⁰ For Thomas' argument on the passivity of women, see: *Summa Theologiae* Ia q.93, a.1, Reply to Objective 1.

¹⁰¹ Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Renegotiating Aquinas," 196-198. On this point, she looks specifically to Rahner, Schillebeeckx and Lonergan for their work on grace and human transcendence.

concepts in Thomist thought, reminding Catholic feminists that he is a “catalyst and sounding board...rather than a direct, unmediated source.”¹⁰²

Central to Cahill’s work is the issue of justice. As a Catholic feminist theologian, she notes that realist gender justice ethics embraces the marginalized (the oppressed, the poor, the subjugated) based on Christ’s central gospel message, and postmodern gendered faith ethics emphasizes God’s presence and grace as the impetus of Christian action. She reminds us that “while feminist spirituality without solidaristic social commitment risks elitism, feminist justice work without grace-full hope risks despair.”¹⁰³ And when asked about the predominance of justice calls in feminist theologies, she explained that justice and charity are intrinsically linked, but that justice provides the trajectory for charity-based action:

Charity needs justice to receive direction as to what specific actions or practices represent love of God and neighbor at the concrete level...Margaret Farley says (I agree) that ‘love must be structured by justice.’ Justice is the virtue of relating to all things/persons in terms of their true value and status. [Therefore] even the charitable can be unjust by virtue of erroneous understandings of what is due certain persons. So being charitable is well and good, but it does not immediately produce moral actions or institutions.¹⁰⁴

Therefore, Cahill’s brand of feminist theology is a balanced ethics that carefully blends traditional Catholic notions of natural law with an historically conscious feminist approach to postmodern gender and sexual critical theory.

¹⁰² Lisa Sowle Cahill, “Renegotiating Aquinas,” 211.

¹⁰³ Lisa Sowle Cahill, “Renegotiating Aquinas,” 211. Note the electronic copy of this article retrieved through ScholarsPortal includes the term “grace-full”.

¹⁰⁴ Lisa Sowle Cahill, in email communication with the author, Sept 15, 2015.

2.5. The Three Theologies as Examples of Critical Theories

Each of these three Catholic theologians brings a unique approach to how meaning is constituted with regard to women's body, being, and interrelationality. Ross emphasizes the process of appropriating the meaning of one's being through the freedom of sacramental experience unique to every human. Farley appeals to the notion of meaning and transcendence from the perspective of the total range of human sexuality held up to the standard of loving justly. And Cahill appeals to the importance of the Thomistic tradition in Roman Catholic thought, insisting that the flexibility and strength of its tenets will allow us to arrive at a common human understanding of the meaning of human experience in our postmodern world.

In sum, these three feminist theologians exemplify the plurality of voices in the field of Catholic ethics as well as the strength and creativity of how different methodologies can serve the same goal: that of human freedom and flourishing. Each approach is unique but also employs the key tools of critical feminist theory: identification and assessment of the problem, contextualization of the problem, deconstruction, and proposal of a solution to the problem, all within a heuristic framework of meaning.

2.6. The Notion of Bias in the Context of Critical Theory and Liberation Philosophy

“Critical consciousness, they say, is anarchic.”

- Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*¹⁰⁵

While it is not necessary to offer a detailed explanation of the history of critical theory and liberation philosophy writ large, it is important to note that feminist theologies employ a critique of oppression that is shared, at least conceptually, with both. Thus, I would like to present two philosophical currents that have been influential in developing and communicating an understanding of operative bias within oppressive contexts: the critical theory of the Frankfurt School and the liberation theory of Paulo Freire.

While I am not claiming that feminist theologies are an offshoot of these two traditions, the phenomenon of bias is assumed to be present in oppressive contexts of social and historical structures by feminist theologians who critique them (as well as the three interlocutors chosen for this study). In short, it is important for my purposes here to gain a precise understanding of the role of bias in oppression.

As a vital philosophical tradition, critical theory can be characterized as an organized and reasoned approach that aims to provide the descriptive and normative bases for social inquiry in response to oppressive forces in all their various manifestations, with the goal of achieving liberation for the human being. As an evolving body of scholarship, the history of critical theory is comprised of

¹⁰⁵ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2000) 35.

waves or historical phases of thought, similar to Western 20th century feminism. The first began with the establishment of the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research (*Institut für Sozialforschung*) in the 1920s in support of the growth of Marxist studies, which is now commonly referred to as the Frankfurt School. With the rise of Nazism in Germany, the school was forced to close and so it moved to Columbia University in New York City in 1935.

This school of thought continued through to the last half of the twentieth century with the influential thinking of Max Horkheimer (1895-1973), Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979), and Theodor Adorno (1903-1969), just to name a few. Their work largely responded to Hegel's theory of dialectics and generally sought an interdisciplinary integration of the social sciences, with a particular focus on empirical analysis in the areas of philosophy theory, sociology, economics, psychology, and history, as well as the development of critical methodologies.

Horkheimer insisted:

that the basic cultural ideas have truth values, and philosophy should measure them against the social background from which they emanate. [Critical theory] opposes the breach between ideas and reality. Philosophy confronts the existent, in its historical context, in order to criticize the relationship between the two and thus transcend them.¹⁰⁶

Therefore, critical theory should serve to meet three objectives: to explain challenges and problems in current society that limit human freedom; to locate those who enact and are affected by these problems; and to provide a clear,

¹⁰⁶ Max Horkheimer, *The Eclipse of Reason* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013) 129.

precise methodology for reasoned evaluation of the rationality of such systems of oppression. As a specific interpretation of Marxist thought and Hegel's dialectics, the first generation of the Frankfurt School sought to wed the lived contextual experience of people and critical social theory toward the goal of human emancipation.

The primary focus of Horkheimer and Adorno was a critique of capitalism as a form of human oppression. Though they began with the Marxist notion of the dialectic between production and belief, they insisted on the importance and necessity of the evaluation of societal rationalization and the validity of human reason in that process, but with the proviso that human reason be treated as part of the historical learning process. Thus, historical consciousness and contextual critique formed the foundation of much of twentieth century critical theory. Johannes Baptist Metz explains succinctly the importance of social critique within historical contexts:

[Our world] in its deepest reality, bears the deep impression of many systems and theories, and which can therefore only be experienced and possibly changed in and through these systems and theories...A praxis which fails to take into account the complex structure of the world or our experience of it as secondary will therefore inevitably remain sporadic and ineffective.¹⁰⁷

A brief review of some of the major work of the Frankfurt School shows the treatment of the notion and nature of oppression (and thereby bias) as fairly uniform in terms of the evolving body of critical theory itself. In their opus *The*

¹⁰⁷ Johannes Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology*, James Ashley (ed.). (New York: Crossroad, 2007) 24.

Dialectic of Enlightenment, Horkheimer and Adorno place the origins of modern oppression squarely on the foundation of the philosophy of the Enlightenment where “Enlightenment stands in the same relationship to things as the dictator to human beings.”¹⁰⁸ The authors never really expound on the exact nature of bias within human behaviour but seek to explain its causes in relation to the philosophical age of reason.

Thus, they argued that oppressive forces in society are a direct result of power struggles caused by the “self-destruction of Western Reason...grounded in an historical and fateful dialectic of the domination of external nature, internal nature and society,”¹⁰⁹ locating the causes of modern oppression in that which was supposed to liberate modern humanity. Coupled with the technical advancement of the forces of production, by the dawn of the twentieth century, society came to be characterized not by the advancement of human reason, but by the increase of fear based on the rapid and massive production of material and the owners of material production that allowed them to adopt positions of social coercion.

In this sense, Horkheimer and Adorno relate the essence of oppression to lack of reason, the sacrifice of thought and individuality, and the paralysis of theory: “But a true praxis capable of overturning the status quo depends on the theory’s refusal to yield to the oblivion in which society allows thought to ossify.”¹¹⁰ In much of their work, both Horkheimer and Adorno focused on the causes and influences

¹⁰⁸ Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002) 6.

¹⁰⁹ Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 218.

¹¹⁰ Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 33.

that control human reasoning stemming from Enlightenment thought, which suggests an epistemological problem, but they do not offer an in-depth explanation of the exact nature of bias itself and how it operates in human consciousness. However, one can garner a glimpse of a more nuanced understanding of the nature of bias in their discussion of the elements of anti-Semitism in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*:

Anti-Semitic behaviour is unleashed in situations in which blinded people, deprived of subjectivity, are let loose as subjects. Their actions – for those involved – are lethal yet meaningless reactions, of the kind which behaviorists register but fail to interpret. Anti-Semitism is well-rehearsed pattern, indeed, a ritual of civilization, and the pogroms are the true ritual murders. They demonstrate the impotence of what might have restrained them – reflection, meaning, ultimately truth.¹¹¹

Their characterization continues in the last section of the book, “Limits of Enlightenment”, yet it is one marked by psychology of the object-subject of the dialectic of Nazi domination against Jews within a class-based society. They speak of how and why the racist behaviour is carried out, but the bias itself is really assumed as a negative given of normative human behaviour in the ongoing search for material power. The quotation above points to an absence of reasoning and sight, coupled with emotion such as anger. Elsewhere in this book, reference is made to self-hatred, resentment, and self-guilt of the oppressor who fears a lack of material power.

¹¹¹ Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 140.

Even in the *Critique of Instrumental Reason*, Horkheimer included pointed commentary on patriarchy in the modern state, specifically the ability of women to reason as men above and beyond the constraints of systemic patriarchy. But again, his explanation is set strictly against the backdrop of economics and the forces of market production and power struggle within that class-based system:

though she has not won emancipation, woman in our manipulated society can make decisions like those of men. It is no longer the traits which once enabled her to avoid reduction to object-status, but those which today require, that develop in the explicit forms modernity calls for...the equation of woman and sex is disappearing; woman is becoming an economic subject in one or another sector of the division of labour, including the household sector.¹¹²

By the 1970s, the second wave of critical theory was well underway, led by Jürgen Habermas (1929-). His theory of communicative rationality, or discourse (speech-act) ethics, is based on the liberative theories of Marx, but with no reference to overcoming oppression with violence. He argues that one's engagement in life (the theory of the person) is situated at the level of meaning, but that such engagement in meaning is driven by many interests, or biased-embedded rationality. For example, he argues that the idea of scientific or philosophical objectivity is illusory due to the inherent biases of those who carry out science and philosophy. While scientific study involves a reasoned empirical approach, the hermeneutic act therein must always be accompanied by critical reflection that recognizes and identifies what Habermas refers to as the hermeneutic task, as well as its historical situatedness:

¹¹² Max Horkheimer, *Critique of Instrumental Reason* (New York: Seabury, 1974) 17.

Hermeneutical consciousness demolishes the objectivistic self-conception of the traditional human sciences. Given the bond between the interpreting scholar and the hermeneutical situation from which he starts, it follows that impartiality of understanding cannot be secured by abstraction from preconceived ideas, but alone through reflection on the effective historical relationship in which the knowing subject always stands to its object.¹¹³

Furthermore, he also argues that human discourse has another inherent characteristic that is emancipatory in nature and emerges in communicative action, where we seek out the meaning of human freedom common to all. This requires dialogue beyond differences. He begins from the notion that all reasonable human consciousness has the capacity for emancipatory self-reflection (involving cognitive, linguistic, and interactive abilities). Moreover, the structures of capitalist society create the unequal power that constrains and distorts that capacity.

For Habermas, understanding societal development “cannot be based exclusively on rationalization at the level of technology and production but also must include the emergence of new capacities involving practical reason, that is normative discourse.”¹¹⁴ Thus, in pre-modern societies, cognitive capacities were limited by religious traditions that defined culture. From this perspective, Habermas’ focus is epistemological as well, but grounded within the context of intersubjective public and communal reason based on a broad account of the validation of truth and rational argument.

¹¹³ Jürgen Habermas, "Hermeneutics and the Social Sciences," *The Hermeneutics Reader*, Kurt Mueller-Vollmer (ed.) (London: Continuum, 1989) 298. See also Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Vol 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, Thomas McCarthy (Trans.) (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985) 22.

¹¹⁴ Raymond Morrow and Carlos Torres, *Reading Freire and Habermas: Critical Pedagogy and Transformative Social Change* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2002) 100.

Dialectic, although related to unequal power relationships in modern and postmodern societies, is caused by distorted communication that produces relations of oppression, which ultimately deceives the subject and object within dialogue. Such language distortion causes a blockage in the individual's process of self-formation and reflective authenticity.¹¹⁵ Although Habermas does not use the term *bias* in his writings, he perceives bias as a type of cognitive blockage at work in human discourse. He does not differentiate on the nature of such a blockage, however, but focuses on overcoming it through the validity claims expressed in various modes of discourse process (explicative, practical, theoretical, and aesthetic and therapeutic criticisms) guided by rules of discourse. Within this framework, Habermas alludes to what other critical theorists might refer to as *bias* or *prejudice* in his reference to naïve supposition, “disguised repression,” “illusory self-deception,” and “hidden constraints.”¹¹⁶ So while he is aware of the existence of personal subjectivity in public discourse, it is really the discourse itself on which Habermas focuses almost entirely.

While Habermas focuses on communicative action in response to oppression, Paulo Freire pursues dialogic action. Freire's notion of oppression as biased human behaviour is explicated in his seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire directly links education with social justice and the struggle for equity and freedom. He appeals to the notion of *conscientização*¹¹⁷ as the

¹¹⁵ Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, J. J. Shapiro (trans.) (Boston: Beacon, 1971) 260.

¹¹⁶ Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action (Vol 1)*, 22.

¹¹⁷ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 35-37.

necessary step in the mind of the oppressed to identify social, political, and economic contradictions toward the awakening of critical consciousness, as the search for self-affirmation is a part of the historical process for the responsible subject. Freire equates oppression and subjugation with dehumanization, which is “a *distortion* of the vocation of becoming more fully human.”¹¹⁸ It is historical but not a given destiny for humanity.

In a fuller definition of oppression, Freire writes:

Any situation in which “A” objectively exploits “B” or hinders his and her pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person is one of oppression. Such a situation in itself constitutes violence, even when sweetened by false generosity, because it interferes with the individual’s ontological and historical vocation to be more fully human.¹¹⁹

As important as this work is within the body of critical liberation theory, Freire never attempts to hone in on the exact nature of bias and prejudicial consciousness. While he explains the effects of oppression on the oppressed consciousness, he does not do the same for that of the oppressor. As such, he treats the bias of oppression as a uniform type of thinking that seeks to degrade, subsume, and dehumanize. Indeed, Freire skillfully and explicitly illustrates *how* oppressive behaviour works as a human phenomenon, but does not attempt to explain the causes or substance of such thinking. It is really only in the first chapter of this book that he alludes to the overall cause of the oppressor class: selfishness

¹¹⁸ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 44.

¹¹⁹ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 55.

of wanting to have more than others, which is perpetrated over generations of oppressors:

This climate creates in the oppressor a strongly possessive consciousness—possessive of the world and of men and women. Apart from direct, concrete, material possession of the world and of people, the oppressor consciousness could not understand itself—could not even exist...transforming everything surrounding it into an object of its domination.¹²⁰

While it is possible to cite many examples of such narcissistic historical figures representing this characterization, for Freire the roots of oppressive thinking are merely enculturated and systematized selfishness that prevent the oppressors from loving others since they can only love themselves. He does not refer to this as a condition of human nature but accepts it as a reality of human behaviour. Therefore, such selfishness is a given element of human living and one that can be overcome only with love.

In this section, I have tried to draw out how critical theorists, at least those I have presented here, approach the notion of the nature of biased thinking and behaviour. The theorists I cited certainly recognize the existence of bias but accept it *a priori* as a given condition of human consciousness. Lonergan's treatment of the notion and nature of human bias is significantly more nuanced, however, as we will see in chapter 3.

Furthermore, another key feature of many critical theorists (including contextual theologians) is their focus on the social and historical structures that

¹²⁰ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 58.

enable and perpetuate racism, patriarchy, homophobia, and other oppressive thinking; this approach provides the framework for their analysis of the problem of bias at work in human consciousness that acts as a blockage or distortion in communication and human action. They thereby approach their analyses with the goal of changing the structures of oppression through methodological tools such as empirical research, phenomenological hermeneutics, experience as a source of data, historical-critical analysis, and deconstruction and retrieval. The rationale is that the dismantling of the structure itself is a justice-oriented goal. Conversely, a structure can be adopted that promotes justice.

Farley's *Just Love* construct supports and appeals to this objective. This is logical and reasonable, but it places the focus of change on a system or structure and does not always address effected change within the interiority of its agents including the oppressor and the oppressed.¹²¹ The eradication of South Africa's Apartheid system is a prime example of this kind of justice-oriented praxis. Although it has been dismantled, many would argue that the systematic oppression of black citizens still continues.¹²² And while some liberation theologians recognize the importance and necessity of the role of transcendence of the oppressed and

¹²¹ While Farley does speak of self-transcendence as a necessary aspect of change and her model of justice in loving does promote that goal, she uses the term "transcendence" in terms of the unity of the body, spirit and indeed gender, so as not to be trapped in preconceived and prescribed meanings, regardless of culture, tradition and experience. After a careful reading of this valuable book, I believe that she intends the meaning of transcendence as in the transcendence of the Christian being through healthy, respectful and loving relationships; she does not specify this in terms of oppressor or oppressed. See Margaret Farley, *Just Love*, 127-128.

¹²² See Alistair Kee, *The Rise and Demise of Black Theology* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006) in particular chapter 3. Also, Kevin Durrheim, *Race Trouble: Race, Identity and Inequality in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2011).

the oppressor (Gutierrez in particular¹²³) they seem to make the assumption that it is the power structure that must change, as power must be taken away from those who perpetrate oppression. Yet, the analysis by these thinkers, including Freire, includes very little on *how* bias actually functions in consciousness. For the most part, their analyses respond to experientially-focused questions (i.e., what happens in an oppressive context?), not questions of an epistemological or cognitive nature (i.e., how does bias operate in human consciousness?).

However, as Matthew Lamb notes,

The most [critical theorists] can disclose are the dialectically divergent horizons of meaning and value that issue in different results of research, different interpretations, contradictory historical analyses, opposed ontologies, variant societies...[S]uch an approach, no matter how sophisticated, minimizes the transformative effect of religious and doctrinal symbols on human experience.¹²⁴

As we will see with Lonergan, dismantling structural systems is really a short-term solution to a problem that precisely requires subjective interiority of a transcendent nature, a solution that merely speaks to one type of bias. Bias is certainly a key factor in the history of oppression, yet the analysis of oppression offered by many critical theorists seems to me to lack a key component: the reflection on the nature of bias itself on the cognitive level. My interest in this thesis is to gain a deeper understanding of bias, how it operates in human

¹²³ And it must be said that although Paulo Freire was not a theologian, the entire focus of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was to raise conscious interiority of the oppressed mind as a necessary step in human conversion toward love of oneself and one's enemy. In this way, it directly supports victim agency.

¹²⁴ Matthew Lamb, *Solidarity with Victims: Toward a Theology of Social Transformation* (New York: Crossroad, 1982) 105.

consciousness, and, notably, how it relates to the oppression of patriarchy within a theological context.

Moreover, with regard to the evolution of feminist theology, it may be a fair question to ask if, like other critical theories of liberation, it also overlooks the cognitive *nature* of bias itself in its fundamental approach to methodological analysis of gender and sexual oppression. As I have attempted to show with the work of my three interlocutors, each employs a methodology that includes the deconstruction of oppressive contexts (such as institutional bias against women) and in doing so identifies the short- and long-term harm caused to women, children, and men. They also formulate and recommend solutions to eradicate such phenomenon, from solidarity with victims to dismantling oppressive structures.

But do they also accept the nature of bias as a homogenous given—the idea that ‘a bias is a bias’? Does that mean their respective approaches to analyzing oppression against women proceed from the assumption that biased thinking, leading to biased action, is of *only one type* of cognitive operation of consciousness? Perhaps within a context of oppression there are really different types of biased thinking in operation, which exacerbate the overall harm caused to all agents involved.

If the collective aim of feminist theologies is a new world of justice, “it is important that [intercultural] debates continue on the conceptual frameworks of

feminist theological language in terms of their ethical-political relevance.”¹²⁵

Therefore, such an epistemology must proceed from a thorough understanding of the nature of the dialectic itself. If one proceeds from the assumption that biased thinking is cognitively homogeneous regardless of the object and outcome of oppressive actions, then perhaps one risks misunderstanding the real nature of the problem of oppression and, furthermore, proposed solutions will not adequately respond to the whole of the dialectic.

With that in mind, I will conclude this chapter. In it I have attempted to achieve three objectives. First, I wished to provide a short summary of the key elements that form the foundation of Catholic feminist theology, including a brief description of their evolution over the last several decades and a few of the challenges facing this body of critical inquiry at the present time.

Second, in explaining the state of the question of women’s agency within the Catholic Church, I presented highlights of the work of my three interlocutors (Susan Ross, Margaret Farley and Lisa Sowle Cahill) with specific mention of how they address the notions of body, being, and intersubjectivity of women. Their work reflects the diversity of Catholic feminist theologians, as well as the common goal of expanding women’s agency in the Church and eradicating oppression and patriarchal forces that serve to oppress that agency.

Finally, I also offered a summary of the history and focus of critical theory in the twentieth century with a view to how social and historical structures of

¹²⁵ María Pilar Aquino, “Theology and Identity in the Context of Globalization”, 434.

oppression are analyzed within this body of work. I now turn to chapter 3: an exposition of Lonergan's notion of bias and his methodological approach to dialectic in history.

Chapter 3. Lonergan's Notion of Bias

"Yet, for as Aristotle remarked, the question
What? very often without any difficulty
changes into Why?"

- Bernard Lonergan,
*The Triune God: Systematics*¹²⁶

"Unsettled methodological problems are
reflected in empirical deficits."

- Jürgen Habermas,
*Der Philosophische Diskurs Der Moderne*¹²⁷

3.1. Introduction

In reference to an oft-quoted passage from Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*, Lonergan proposes that to understand the *whatness* (or *quidditas*) of a thing is really to understand the reason for its being, its *why* (*quare*). In this sense, the why of something's existence explains its what.

One observation I have made from reading the comments and analyses of various feminist critical theorists is that the whatness of bias, and the role it plays in patriarchal oppression, is often overlooked in the analysis of the effects of its existence and the harm it produces. In so doing, the nature of the cognitive phenomenon itself is presumed rather than deeply explored in the process of providing an account of how it operates and the detrimental effects of its existence.

¹²⁶ Bernard Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, Robert Doran and Daniel Monsour (eds.), (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007) 579.

¹²⁷ Jürgen Habermas, *Der Philosophische Diskurs Der Moderne* (Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought), Frederick Lawrence (Trans.) (Boston: MIT Press, 1990).

Such analysis seems to begin from the supposition that ‘a bias is a bias,’ thereby failing to explain or adequately explore its roots and cause.

I find this somewhat short sighted. Upon reading Lonergan’s approach to bias as a scotosis of the mind and his specific categorizing of four separate types of bias, I am able to avoid this supposition and ask at the outset whether and how the differentiation of biases affects the analysis of a given oppression. I am then able to ask if the results of my analysis will be deeper and more revealing.

Furthermore, as many critical feminist theologies look to justice as a solution to Christian patriarchy (as do many liberation theologies), how will the viability of that solution size up if the bias in question is revealed in a clearer light based on a more precisely differentiated *quidditas*? In other words, will a justice-based solution in this particular context of biased patriarchal oppression be the most theologically sound or reasoned solution given a Lonerganian analysis of the root bias(es) that fuel the contextual problem and resulting dialectic? And, if a more precise exposure of the essence of the problem itself is discovered, will the problem then be defined differently in terms of its *quare*?

Therefore, the goal of this chapter is to present a precise explanation of Lonergan’s notion of bias, and more specifically, the group and general biases that serve as the theoretical foundation for the overall study. Before a methodology can be applied in support of a goal-oriented praxis, the theory of that methodology must be expounded in sufficient detail.

I want to make two important points at this juncture. Like much of Lonergan’s work, his notion of bias is dense and complex. To summarize it or

present it in too concise of a manner will ill serve its use in this study. Furthermore, along with many of Lonergan's notions, it cannot be neatly extracted from his larger body of work as a stand-alone concept and so must be explained in conjunction with related notions and processes.

With that in mind, this chapter is organized according to three related sections. First, in order to understand Lonergan's treatment of bias, his notion of *common sense* as a distinctive viewpoint must first be situated, including how it relates to theory in terms of its subject (and various patterns of human experience) and its object (practicality, intersubjectivity and social tension, or dialectic). This section will include a presentation of Lonergan's alternative to critical theory, that of *critical realism*, as how he proposed viewing and assessing (perhaps as opposed to critiquing) a system of oppression.

My aim is to show how Lonergan's approach to oppression, through his carefully crafted treatment of biases, differs from the more traditional and common approach to bias and oppression within the overall body of critical theory. Already this helps to illustrate how Lonergan's treatment of bias differs from more traditional critical approaches. Since Lonergan views common sense as a particular realm of meaning, expressed as a particular type of human intelligence, the role it plays in manifesting biases serves as the explanatory foundation for his treatment of biases.

This section will be followed by a discussion of Lonergan's notion of one type of bias: group bias, which represents the overall phenomenon of bias found in most critical theories. Many critical theorists refer to this as prejudice (against a

race, a person, a gender, a sexuality, etc.) or even a predisposition that is driven by the self-interest of a particular group to the detriment of another group. As Lonergan explains, “group egoism not merely directs development to its own aggrandizement but also provides a market for opinions, doctrines, theories that will justify its ways and...reveal the misfortunes of other groups to be due to their depravity.”¹²⁸ Tragically there are myriad examples of wide-scale group bias from the Babylonian exile of the Jews in the fifth century B.C. to the more recent systemic political oppression by the Assad government in Syria. And small scale group bias continues to exist on all levels of society globally.

Finally, this chapter will culminate in a detailed examination of Lonergan’s notion of the general bias, or that which manifests itself universally in the form of “inattention, oversight, unreasonableness and irresponsibility,” representing the bias against theory, and against ideas and proposed solutions that appeal to the theoretical.¹²⁹ Due to the very nature of the general bias, that of an ultimate concern with the immediate and practical of everyday living, it renders common sense thinking incapable of identifying a higher viewpoint that could provide a solution to a serious problem of human living, and moreover, refuses to do so. The general bias reflects common sense thinking, which is inherently non-theoretical.

As we will see, Lonergan does not treat the human phenomenon of bias (in any of the forms he elucidates) as a singular universal behaviour reflecting human

¹²⁸ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 54.

¹²⁹ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 55.

nature. Rather, he begins from the perspective that the four types of biases are, fundamentally, blockages to the truth, but each is manifested differently.

Briefly, Lonergan carefully and deliberately categorizes cognitive bias as comprising four types, each of which constitutes a distinct 'flight from understanding' or a scotosis, which is simply "an incomplete development in the intelligent and reasonable use of one's own intelligence and reasonableness."¹³⁰ He characterizes the four types of biases of human consciousness as: the dramatic or that which stems from neurosis or trauma of the psyche; individual egoism or self-centeredness; the group bias which is found in the dialectic of human oppression (and which is most commonly addressed by liberation theologies); and finally, what Lonergan refers to as the general bias of common sense, or what could be described as anti-intellectualism, which opposes anything theoretically-related including large scale problems that require complex insights and long term solutions. In each account, insights that could counter the effects of the bias are prevented or suppressed. In this study, I chose to focus only on the group bias and the general bias of common sense as it is these two of the four, when combined, that contribute most to human decline.

It is my contention, then, that by illustrating the characteristics of two of the four biases that Lonergan presents, the group and the general biases (including their affects in terms of social decline), a more precise methodological analysis can be carried out concerning the phenomenon of human oppression, in this case, that

¹³⁰ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 6.

of patriarchy. Therefore, Lonergan's treatment of bias in this regard may provide a more accurate explanation of the particular theological problem in question here. If that is the case, the value for feminist theological critical methodologies may be significantly relevant in terms of identifying a more exacting nature of the problem of oppression and the possibility and substance of a theological solution that more suitably reflects it.

3.2. Situating Theological Dialectical Analysis: Lonergan's Notion of Dialectical Methodology

Lonergan's scholarly corpus spans far beyond critical analysis and indeed it is difficult to capture concisely his uniquely personal yet resolutely empirical method for understanding insight and its transformative role in human living, where insight is intended to mean a supervening act of understanding and not merely "any act of attention or advertence or memory."¹³¹ While twentieth century scholarship insisted on the necessity of objectivity for those who partake in empirical studies, Lonergan decisively argued that one only reaches objectivity through the process of attaining authentic subjectivity. For the theologian, this required a re-visioning of theological method. One of Lonergan's most cited (and comical) quotations regards the praxis of theological method, or how theological practitioners go about their work. He writes, "Method is not a set of rules to be followed meticulously by a dolt. It is a framework for collaborative creativity."¹³²

¹³¹ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 3.

¹³² Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, xi.

In *Method in Theology*, he lays out this framework, which encompasses eight separate functional specialties within theological scholarship that form a cluster of distinct operations: research, interpretation, history, dialectic, foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications. None of these functions are meant to be carried out in separate silos, but ideally within a community of theologians in collaboration with scholars of other fields in the humanities and sciences. In short, he offers a framework for creativity to address the challenges and opportunities for human development in our ever-changing cultures.

There is a dual focus of dialectical analysis for Lonergan: “there is a first application to the object, which falls short of intelligibility. There is a second application to the subject of human science, who may or may not anticipate complete intelligibility in his object.”¹³³ For example, the object of a scholar in the field of religious studies may be the intelligibility of a particular faith tradition: the data of its liturgies, its tradition, its doctrine, its effective role in history, etc. In this case, the subject is the scholar pursuing this line of study, but attempting to maintain as much objectivity in her study as possible. But precisely because all people are subject to bias (those of the object of study and the subject of study), bias accumulates both over time based on incomplete and distorted data.

Lonergan, however, insists on not only attention to the data of the object, but also the subjective role of the theologian. For this reason, “the moral theologian

¹³³ Bernard Lonergan, “Moral Theology and Human Sciences,” in *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980*, Robert Croken, Frederick Crowe and Robert Doran (eds.), (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004) 305.

has to consider, not a single but a double set of moral issues...there are the moral issues that arise in the object studies in the human science...[and] there are the moral issues that arise in the subjects that do the studying of the object of human science.”¹³⁴ In comparing the theologian with the secularist, he notes that the secularist faces an ongoing dialectic in herself: that of trying to remain objective (or worse, believing that she is) in her pursuit of data analysis. He claims that objectivity is impossible because we are subjective beings that can only realize objectivity through the process of existential self-discovery through one’s capacities for being attentive, for exercising intelligent inquiry, and employing reasonable judgment. This point is significant because through existential change in ourselves, we see the object of our study more clearly in terms of rightness of value:

The secularist, who denies God that he may affirm man, who rejects institutional religion because he finds it blocking human development, can hardly reject the existential subject’s discovery of himself, acceptance of himself, realization of his own potentialities...[who] cannot but distinguish between the merely bright ideas of understanding and the affirmations of sound judgment...he is aware of his feelings, of the values they can reveal, of the moment; of moral truth in which he finds himself when he asks himself whether this or that course of action is truly good, really worthwhile. Because he would affirm all that is good in man, he will face the existential challenge and make the existential decision to be guided not by satisfaction but by value.¹³⁵

Therefore, the existential turn to the self is not enough for Lonergan as it brings us to a state of relativism; the theologian must go further by a process of self-appropriation to the point where values in human living move beyond

¹³⁴ Bernard Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980*, 307.

¹³⁵ Bernard Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980*, 296.

maximum satisfaction for the greatest number to the greatest value of what is true, right, and good for the greatest number. And this requires subjectivity of the scholar toward objective authenticity. For when we submit our own understandings to critically reflective processes that discern judgments of fact and value, we discover the essence of what is really true and good: “The authentic practice of our ethical intentionality in and of itself leads us to discern and distinguish between what is truly of value and what is not.”¹³⁶

When this is then applied to our work, we cannot help but be subjective, but this is a subjectivity that leads us not to biased conclusions, but authentic objectivity. This point will become critical later in this chapter when we see how this element of subjectivity will affect the analysis of the dialectical issue at hand and allow the theologian to go beyond the philosopher.¹³⁷

With this in mind, I turn now to dialectic, which is one of the eight functional specialties that Lonergan addresses and the overarching focus of this study. By dialectic, Lonergan means specifically conflict that originates from opposed horizons of meaning and values; this conflict can only be overcome by an intellectual, moral, and religious conversion.¹³⁸ Dialectical analysis, then, brings such conflicts to light with respect to our subjective differences within the various horizons of meaning in our lives as part of the larger world mediated by meaning. As Lonergan notes, this world is:

¹³⁶ Patrick Byrne, *The Ethics of Discernment*, 304.

¹³⁷ Bernard Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980*, 359-360.

¹³⁸ A fuller discussion of Lonergan's notion of conversion appears later in this chapter in situating the solution to evil.

known not by the sense experience of an individual but by the external and internal experience of a cultural community, and by the continuously checked and rechecked judgments of the community. Knowing, accordingly, is not just seeing; it is experiencing, understanding, judging and believing. [Thus] the criteria of objectivity are not just the criteria of ocular vision; they are the compounded criteria of experiencing, of understanding, of judging, and of believing.¹³⁹

Lonergan argues that it is through these operations that we come to know reality objectively and come to experience and understand self-transcendence. Yet there are breakdowns when our various horizons of meaning clash precisely because the phenomenon of bias acts as a blockage that prevents conversions toward authentic living based on the true, the right, and the good. It is Lonergan's functional specialty of dialectic that addresses these conflicts and biases that are active in human living. For example, as will be addressed later, we have different horizons of meaning within the field of feminist theology where two or more conflict dramatically on an issue such as the interpretation of a doctrine, leading to "opposed value judgments, opposed accounts of historical movements, opposed interpretations of authors, and different selections of relevant data in special research."¹⁴⁰ Such is the objectified problem of dialectical analysis.

The structure of dialectical analysis is twofold and comprised of its operators and the data of positions and counterpositions to be studied, which are nothing other than concrete opposed moments in history.¹⁴¹ Operators can be one of two

¹³⁹ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 238.

¹⁴⁰ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 248.

¹⁴¹ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, chapter 10.

types: one who knows from personal experience what constitutes intellectual, moral, and religious conversion, and one who does not. The former can distinguish authentic positions and counterpositions, the latter cannot. Thus, dialectical analysis is as much about identifying conflicts in history as it is about discovery of oneself when carrying out the analysis itself. As Lonergan writes: “the basic idea of the method we are trying to develop takes its stand on discovering what human authenticity is and *showing how to appeal to it* ... for man’s deepest need and most prized achievement is authenticity.”¹⁴²

3.3. Lonergan’s Notion of Common Sense

Within the fields of philosophy and theology, there are many common terms. However, their use by Lonergan often does not have the same meaning or intent as I have mentioned previously. In modern English vernacular, *common sense* tends to denote the epistemological ability of all reasonable human beings to understand and decide.

Yet for Lonergan, this term takes on a different meaning, one that he locates on a particular level of consciousness. He identifies four separate operations of human consciousness, each of which mediates meaning in its own way. In the differentiated conscience, or that of one who is aware of his manifold of human consciousness in its many identifiable sets of operations, a pattern of levels of conscious operations become known as the empirical, the intelligent, the rational, and the responsible. The empirical level includes sensory experiencing: feeling,

¹⁴² Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 254. Emphasis mine.

moving, imagination, speaking and perception. The intelligent level involves understanding where the mind inquires and expresses, and figuring out presuppositions and implications of objects of human understanding. The next level is the rational involving conscious operations of reflecting, weighing evidence, marshalling evidence, and judging in response to *if* or *whether* questions. And finally, the fourth level concerns itself with questions of *should* or *ought* in terms of responsibility, where conscious operations evaluate, decide, select, and perform the outcome.

Lonergan also distinguishes between four realms of meaning:¹⁴³ a. common sense where meaning is expressed in the everyday language of everyday practical living and intersubjectivity; b. the theoretical stage of meaning that is expressed with specialized, articulate, and technical language, seeking formality and more comprehensive answers to inquiring intelligence; c. the level of interiority that reflects subjective self-meaning based on Lonergan's notion of self-appropriation and an understanding of how all the realms of meaning relate to each other; and d. the level of transcendent exigence where one experiences transcendent mystery through the process of an unrestricted demand for intelligibility of "vertical liberty" toward the "dynamic state of being in love" with God.¹⁴⁴ Each realm is unique and reflects the extent to which an individual questions.

As Lonergan notes, it is the highly developed consciousness that can distinguish between the realms of meaning: "when the critical exigence turns

¹⁴³ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 81-85.

¹⁴⁴ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 122.

attention upon interiority, when self-appropriation is achieved, when the subject relates his different procedures to the several realms, relates the several realms to one another, and consciously shifts from one realm to another by consciously changing his procedures.”¹⁴⁵ The unity of all four differentiated consciousnesses is fundamentally based on self-knowledge that identifies and distinguishes each realm of meaning and can shift between each.

However, in the undifferentiated consciousness, common sense does not make the leap to appeal to theory, or consciously ask questions to understand it. The realm of common sense thinking seeks a type of knowledge that is neither specialized nor objective for the purposes of “methodical exploitation of universality,” but for the purposes of practical application.¹⁴⁶ Such knowledge is incomplete and limited in scope and applicability. Lonergan offers the example of the proverb *look before you leap*, which “aims to express, not the scientist’s rounded set of insights that either holds in every instance or in none at all, but the incomplete set of insights which is called upon in every concrete instance but becomes proximately relevant.”¹⁴⁷ Often, common sense thinking argues from analogy or from perception of appearance, as in *if he did this, then it must mean that he is that*.

¹⁴⁵ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 84.

¹⁴⁶ Bernard Lonergan, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: Understanding and Being: The Halifax Lectures on Insight*. Elizabeth Morelli and Mark Morelli (eds.), (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990) 86.

¹⁴⁷ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 199.

Furthermore, common sense thinking is culturally and contextually conditioned, which explains why people from different cultural contexts are challenged to understand each other. This is not information that is lost in linguistic translation, but rather information that just is not there as commonly understood between differing peoples:

...when there is such stratification, incomprehension can exist not only between classes within a country, which is one of the fundamental social problems of the present time, but also between nations. The more diverse a whole cultural background is, the greater that incomprehension.¹⁴⁸

There are as many types of common senses as there are cultures, histories, and languages, which accounts for the pluralistic character of human history. This point is important for the analysis in this study, for it serves as the window through which we will see how the general bias, as a form of common sense thinking, serves as a barrier between various groups' approaches and understanding of one another, particularly concerning the same subject or issue.

It is also important to point out that common sense thinking is intelligent and a necessary element of human intersubjectivity. Although not built up in the same manner as scientific or theoretical knowledge, it is accumulated knowledge that organizes its discovered knowledge but because the questions it attempts to answer are those of everyday living (such as 'what's going on here, right now?'), the answers reflect the nature of those types of questions which are limited, time sensitive and asked for the purposes of immediate practicality. So in this common

¹⁴⁸ Bernard Lonergan, *Understanding and Being*, 91 and *Insight*, 203.

context, the answer is sought immediately and moreover, must make sense in the immediate context. It is a safe conjecture that the internet age of the instant availability of information will only heighten this feature of common sense thinking.

Furthermore, when one believes it has found a common-sense solution to a common sense problem, the subject refrains from asking further questions. This is its central inherent limitation. Since the medium of communication is not formal inquiry, but that surrounding every day intersubjective relations conditioned by subjective human emotion, limited concern, changing social situations and evolving cultures, which do so of course at different rates, it reflects the attitudes and accumulated knowledge of a particular time and place of being. It results in knowledge, not for its own sake, but for efficiency and utility here and now. This is not to say that it is not valuable or even less valuable than scientific specialized knowledge that seeks universals. It merely means that common sense thinking works differently than scientific thinking precisely because the goals of each, in seeking knowledge, are different. The challenge of common sense solutions to problems, as Patrick Byrne explains, is that such solutions affect not just the here and now, but:

Every concrete situation is also related actually and potentially to people and circumstances both present in the space and time, as well as distant in space and in time, both in the future and in the past...[for example] what were regarded as commonsense solutions to disposal of industrial waste products a century ago turned out to have had deleterious consequences for people today and in the future...but were beyond the horizon of the commonsense concerns of people a century ago.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Patrick Byrne, *The Ethics of Discernment: Lonergan's Foundations for Ethics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016) 101.

This illustrates the incompleteness and short-sightedness of common sense thinking in terms of problem solving. Accordingly, common sense thinking needs to be complemented by the higher ideals that result from theoretical thinking which provides a wider realm of correct understanding due to its more extensive scope, explanatory nature and methods; as such, theoretical thinking augments the limits and focus of commonsense thinking.

Yet, are the values and meanings that come about by both levels of thinking (commonsense and theory) sufficient to address the larger scale problems of human living? Lonergan says no, since despite the value of differentiation of consciousness in both these types of thinking, one must also appeal to the stage of meaning in terms of interiority. As previously mentioned, it is this realm of meaning that seeks to understand how the different realms of meaning relate to each other in terms of common sense, theory, aesthetics, and religious transcendence. Along with Eric Voegelin's reminder that life is experienced as movement either toward a meaningful direction, or not, Robert Doran puts this point in perspective for us:

The operations that Lonergan has uncovered in their relations to one another—inquiry, insight, conceptualization, formulation, reflective understanding, judgment of fact, deliberation, judgment of value, decision, acts of love—are the acts through which we find direction in that movement. Without an articulate understanding of these acts and of their objectives, for they are acts that constitute...successive degrees of self-transcendence, one cannot develop an adequate scientific appreciation of what constitutes a genuinely flourishing human person.¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 45.

The point I wish to make here is that on its own, common sense thinking is unable to generate and furthermore differentiate the required questions that will lead to higher and more integrated solutions to complex problems facing humanity. Because common sense thinking does not see the need for higher ideas, it has an inherent, unavoidable bias.

3.4 The Anatomy of Bias

Lonergan noted in the preface of *Insight* that bias is the most significant problem facing humanity:

The flight from understanding blocks the insights that concrete situations demand...No problem is at once more delicate and more profound, more practical and perhaps more pressing. How, indeed, is a mind to become conscious of its own bias when that bias springs from a communal flight from understanding and is supported by the whole texture of a civilization.¹⁵¹

As previously mentioned, Lonergan did not treat the human phenomenon of biased behaviour as one caused by an inherent flaw of human nature, nor as singular universal behaviour manifested in all realms of human living. Rather, he considers bias to be a manifestation of a scotosis that acts to block intelligible understanding and the discovery of authenticity and truth. Singularly, such an aberration of understanding is an unconscious blind spot arising as a “censorship that governs the emergence of psychic contents.”¹⁵² So, in Lonergan’s words:

¹⁵¹ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 8.

¹⁵² Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 215.

just as wanting an insight penetrates below the surface to bring forth schematic images that give rise to the insights, so not wanting an insight has the opposite effect of repressing from consciousness a scheme that would suggest the insight.¹⁵³

In this sense, it is thought that *prevents* further thought that would otherwise allow the process of having an insight in order to have further insights toward the truth. It is worth quoting Lonergan on this point in order to understand the interplay between censorship and aberration:

Primarily, the censorship is constructive; it selects and arranges materials that emerge in consciousness in a perspective that gives rise to an insight; this positive activity has by implication a negative aspect, for other materials are left behind, and other perspectives are not brought to light ...the aberration of the censorship is primarily repressive; its positive activity is to prevent the emergence into consciousness of perspectives that would give rise to unwanted insights; it introduces so to speak, the exclusion of arrangement into the field of the unconscious; it dictates the manner in which neural demand functions are not to be met, and the negative aspect of its positive activity is the admission to consciousness of any materials in any other arrangement or perspective. Finally, both the censorship and its aberration differ from the conscious advertence to a possible mode of behaviour and conscious refusal to behave in that fashion. For the censorship and its aberration are operative prior to conscious advertence, and they regard directly not how we are to behave but *what we are to understand*...inasmuch as the scotosis grounds the conscious affective attitudes of the ego performing in his own private theatre, it also involves the repression of opposite combination of neural demand functions; and in like manner these demands make their way into consciousness with the affect detached from its initial object and attached to some other more or less incongruous object.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 215. Also, by 'scheme' Lonergan intends a more precise meaning than is commonly used, where a recurrent scheme is simply a series or a pattern of interdependent, regularly recurring events, such as a cycle of progress or decline. Such cycles are not completely random or happenstance, but constituted by conditions that create ever evolving schemes.

¹⁵⁴ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 216-217. Emphasis mine.

Therefore, the repression of the censorship has the overall effect of preventing further insights through an avoidance of the process of unrestricted questioning, which would correct the inaccuracy and falsity of the bias itself. And such insights become unwanted to avoid such correction. We look for complete answers when we ask, but often we find incomplete information and most often incomplete answers contain kernels of truth that require further questioning. Moreover, as Byrne notes, censorship and repression in the form of bias “constantly devise new strategies in order to ignore questions or to convince the biased individuals that imperfect answers really are correct.”¹⁵⁵ It amounts to inauthentic subjectivity that prevents objective knowing.

To explore further the relationship between censorship and repression, a brief look at the operative effects of *ressentiment* is useful. In Scheler’s account¹⁵⁶ of *ressentiment*, loosely translated from the French word as *re-feeling*, it is an experience of the re-feeling of a previous injury or perceived injury where the individual is unable to expunge the feelings caused by the injury or trauma. The individual experiences severe tension and torment due to the feeling of impotence in having experienced the original trauma. The individual continues to relive these

¹⁵⁵ Patrick Byrne, *The Ethics of Discernment*, 64.

¹⁵⁶ While Nietzsche wrote extensively about the phenomenon of *ressentiment*, it is Scheler’s account that interests me more precisely because he focuses on the affectivity of *ressentiment* as opposed to its emergence in history. As Elizabeth Murray notes, Scheler is concerned with “its constitution as an effect, its relation to the objective hierarchy of values fundamental to his ethics, and its social and political significance... Scheler’s approach, then, is more synchronic in contrast to Nietzsche’s more diachronic approach.” See: Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2003); Max Scheler, *Ressentiment*, (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1994); and Elizabeth Murray Morelli, “Ressentiment and Rationality,” *Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy*, Boston, Massachusetts, August 10–15, 1998, <http://www.bu.edu/wcp/Papers/Anth/AnthMore.htm>.

feelings and resent the value(s) exhibited by the injurer. In this case, fear experienced during the injury itself is re-experienced in the future and coupled with various negative feelings: inadequacy, insecurity, lack of self-esteem, anger, jealousy, hatred, resentment toward the injurer, etc.

Elizabeth Murray argues that the sense of self-valuation for the one who experiences *ressentiment* is derivative since he comes to identify such values with those performed by the one who injured him, feeling alienated from them and not worthy.¹⁵⁷ Such values could be wealth, intelligence, beauty, confidence, power, and/or strength. The injured feels that injustice has been carried out and naturally asks why he cannot have these values in his life, feeling envious. Murray continues:

The addition of three more constituents—mendacity, inversion of values, and repression, transform envy into resentment. The subject engages in the self-deception through which he is convinced that the unattainable value is really not valuable after all, and thus is not desired. This sour-grapes conviction devalues the desired value and corrupts one's entire hierarchy of value preferences. One convinces oneself that one does not want that value, but the conviction is only superficial. One's true longing for that value is repressed and continues to distort the psyche unconsciously. The repression is thorough and fixed, the person of *ressentiment* even pities the poor soul that bears the value with a charity tinged with spite.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ Elizabeth Murray Morelli, "Ressentiment and Rationality."

¹⁵⁸ Elizabeth Murray, "Bigotry and Passion," *41st Lonergan Workshop* (Boston College, June 2014) 5.

In light of this discussion on *ressentiment*, let me now offer a hypothetical—but telling—example of the interplay between censorship and repression in the mind.

A woman grows up radically poor in a small town during the depression era, within a family of several children. She witnesses the values and privileges of those few families in her community who are wealthy and able to endure the effects of the depression with little sacrifice. Envious of the material possessions of the wealthier children including abundant food, she develops feelings of inadequacy, anger, injustice, and low self-esteem particularly toward these children who do not associate with her because of her own family's low social standing. As she develops into a young adult, her low self-esteem becomes repressed and a clear and ongoing tension between censorship and repression ensues. Throughout her adult life, she carries with her the mistaken belief that *the wealthy have it all*—security, material abundance, success, healthy desirable relationships, confidence, and of course happiness, precisely because they are wealthy.

This belief manifests itself in a clear bias toward those in society who are financially well off, acting as a blind spot so that she cannot discover the reality of their lives, even when she comes to know such people: that despite their financial security and abundance of material possessions, they can and do divorce, may face substance abuse challenges, can lack self-esteem, and encounter challenges with raising their children—the same dialectical tribulations faced by all. But her scotosis acts as a block to this information because, over many years, it has arranged her view of the wealthy in society in such a way that has prevented her

from asking questions, indeed avoiding them altogether, about how their lives are really lived.

This scotosis has skewed her personal value system throughout her adult life, as she has always placed more weight and meaning on materially-derived possessions and made many of her decisions in life based on this fact. The repression of this censorship acts to prevent further insights about the truth of human happiness and intersubjective dialectic (regardless of one's monetary wealth) precisely because were she to pursue the questions that would lead her toward authentic insights, she would have to re-feel the initial pain, humiliation, and injustice she felt growing up radically poor.

As Lonergan has observed, the censorship and its repression are pre-conscious and control "what we are to understand...inasmuch as the scotosis grounds the conscious affective attitudes of the ego performing in his own private theatre," thereby preventing intelligible understanding and the discovery of authenticity and truth of oneself and others.

But how we act, based on such a controlled and limited understanding, also reflects a skewed and underdeveloped personal value system. In fact, in this woman's case, the ongoing tension between the censorship and its repression is only alleviated through acts of overspending, accumulation of material possessions far beyond need and utility, and *ad hominem* criticism of those whom she perceives to be privileged and wealthy, or conversely, irrational admiration.

In the case I have sketched here, the operation of this bias is so pervasive in this woman's operations of consciousness that it has prevented her from

developing toward a differentiated consciousness. Accordingly, she finds those with a more differentiated consciousness outside or beyond her own horizon of meaning and understanding, feeling *ressentiment* toward them as well.¹⁵⁹

I have included this discussion on *ressentiment* because I believe it aptly illustrates how biases can be caused, how they operate within the human consciousness, and ultimately how they negatively affect the development of one's value system on into adulthood, to repeat the cycle of bias. This is not to say that all biases operate in the manner of *ressentiment*, but as Lonergan noted, "the analysis of *ressentiment* can turn out to be a tool of ethical, social and historical criticism" particularly as to how it relates to the values one chooses to live by throughout life."¹⁶⁰

3.5 The Context of Biases: Lonergan's Scale of Values

Biases do not manifest within a vacuum, even on the individual level. They occur and affect intersubjective living within historical contexts that can be characterized by the interplay of values, cultures, and traditions. Briefly, Lonergan outlines his scale of values or preferences in *Method in Theology*, which recognizes the interrelationship between feelings and values of human living in the following ascending order: vital, social, cultural, personal, and religious. Table 2 (following page) presents these elements with corresponding examples, where each level sublates¹⁶¹ the lower.

¹⁵⁹ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 273.

¹⁶⁰ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 33.

¹⁶¹ In his discussion on dialectic in *Method*, the term 'sublate' as Lonergan intends more reflects Rahner's use rather than Hegel's, where "what sublates goes beyond what is sublated, introduces

As the values of each level are realized throughout the process of ascension, so too is our response to a set of values that “carries us towards self-transcendence and selects an object of the sake of whom or of which we transcend ourselves.”¹⁶² Thus the meaning of values that we derive from each level leads us to an ever-more transcendent living. As we move toward the apex of the scale, the values in our lives become wholly mediated by our relationship with God, where we realize that “the supreme illustration is loving...[, which] transforms an ‘I’ and ‘thou’ into a ‘we’ so intimate, so secure, so permanent, that each attends, imagines, thinks, plans, feels, speaks, acts in concern for both.”¹⁶³

But of course, as we traverse this scale in terms of beliefs, feelings, intersubjectivity, and living, the journey toward the top is negatively influenced directly by biases and how we consciously overcome them toward a more charitable state of living.

something new and distinct, puts everything on a new basis, yet so far from interfering with the sublated or destroying it, on the contrary needs it, includes it, preserves all its proper features and properties, and carries them forward to a fuller realization within a richer context.” 241. This is important for my purposes here and for a number of Lonergan’s notions, particularly emergent probability.

¹⁶² Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 31.

¹⁶³ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 32-33.

Table 2. Lonergan's Scale or Hierarchy of Values

Scale or Hierarchy of Values		
Religious	Self-transcendence 	The value of the utterly transcendent Other that moves one to become an originator of values with respect to others, toward the state of dynamic unrestricted loving that reflects Christ's being and teaching. Self-denial of all that is inauthentic. The religious value of God's love as expressed and cited by Lonergan: "God's love flooding our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us." (Romans 5:5)
Personal		Those values that award meaning for self-actualization such as those that inform personal identity and self-authenticity: integrity, wholeness of being, self, and intersubjective respect.
Cultural		Those values that give meaning on the community level that inform a way of life expressed in such things as aesthetic creativity, intellectual pursuits, cultural traditions, and heritage.
Social		Values of intersubjective living such as group interaction, professional/working environments: career, friendships, dialectic within relationships.
Vital		Values of subjective living such as health, comfort, security, personal interests and pursuits found at the level of experience: food, housing, physical fitness.

Thus, it is not a formulaic scale that neatly advances toward personal and religious conversion, but rather represents the ongoing tension throughout our lives of conflicting authentic and inauthentic preferences regarding intersubjective living.

The chief benefit of the scale is that it serves as a clear analytical tool to help the theologian navigate the relationship between the elements of the cultural matrix as it intersects with religion and faith beliefs. The scale constitutes a hierarchy of values for human living that is lost in the postmodern mire of relativism.

Robert Doran has done much work in this area of Lonergan's thought and shows how it can be applied effectively not just to the individual but also as a tool regarding the importance of historical consciousness and the evolution of human intellect: "The authenticity or inauthenticity of individual subjects is the ground of the authenticity or inauthenticity of cultural traditions...and [that] is the ground of the integrity or disarray of the social order."¹⁶⁴

In terms of how the scale functions in communal living, the higher levels set the conditions for how the lower levels function recurrently. Therefore, when problems occur at the lower levels, say social clashes stemming from racism or capital inequities such as those on which Marx focused, they will "be the occasion for the questions that will prompt the needed developments and breakthroughs at the higher levels."¹⁶⁵ For example, the intellectual emergence of twentieth-century critical theory could be considered a response to the questions that were asked by Enlightenment thinkers in the previous centuries with the intent to positively effect change at the higher level of cultural intersubjectivity.

Thus, as Doran concludes, the dialectic of the individual (at the lowest level of the scale) becomes the ground of the dialectic of the community to which he or she

¹⁶⁴ Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 147.

¹⁶⁵ Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 148.

belongs, and “any effort to shift the foundational issue elsewhere is in fact an evasion of the issue.”¹⁶⁶ Accordingly, the significance of the scale of values not only reflects its use as a tool for dialectical analysis, but also aids in assessing the situation of a theological source more deeply through research, interpretation, and historical analysis precisely by providing “a generalized heuristic structure of history as the general-categorical context for understanding Christian teaching, doctrines and positions.”¹⁶⁷

When placed within the larger historical perspective of humanity *and* Christianity, through the lens of historical consciousness, this heuristic scale helps to reveal the meanings and values that drive dialectic of any given spatial-temporal cultural matrix. Doran continues:

These meanings and values are a function not only of the relative differentiation or compactness of consciousness in the midst of the tension of existence, but also of the authenticity or inauthenticity grounded in the presence or absence of the various dimensions of conversion...[Thus] the alternative to imperialistic praxis and its ramification would be based in the integral scale of values, precisely as that scale is concretely directive of authentic development today: that is to say, as the global maldistribution of vital goods calls for a new socioeconomic order that itself depends on the set of cross-culturally generated cultural values grounded in the epochal transformation of personhood.¹⁶⁸

That is to say, by employing the scale of values as the heuristic structure in which bias is placed concerning its role in a given dialectic, we can derive a clearer

¹⁶⁶ Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 149.

¹⁶⁷ Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 14.

¹⁶⁸ Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 550.

picture of its affective meaning regarding its emergence in a particular time, place, and culture in relation to Christianity and its teaching.

With this in mind, then, I will now turn to an analysis of two of Lonergan's four biases: the group bias and the general bias of common sense with the aim of presenting how the two interrelate and affect the scale of values and human living, for as Lonergan argues, it is precisely these two kinds of biases that reinforce each other to cause the long cycle of human decline. Ultimately this leads us to the root of ethics, which Lonergan notes "lies neither in the sentences nor in propositions nor in judgments but in the dynamic structure of rational self-consciousness."¹⁶⁹

3.6. Group Bias and the Short Cycle of Decline of Human Living

Like the individual who decides and acts based on selfish egoism (which Lonergan refers to as the individual bias), "so also the group is prone to have a blind spot for the insights that reveal its well-being to be excessive or its usefulness at an end."¹⁷⁰ This form of bias effects the development of social order for the good of all when tensions arise between two or more groups within that overall social order.

Group bias manifests itself through the promotion of one group's self-interest over another's, hence the phenomena of gender oppression, slavery, genocide, and classism just to name a few. Fueled by group frustration, bitterness, and learned hatred, "the drive towards mutuality with members of the group, takes

¹⁶⁹ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 627.

¹⁷⁰ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 248.

precedence over the demands of practical intelligence and responsibility,”¹⁷¹ in a direct response to the group’s perceived threats to its existence and its benefits. Why the perception of threats? This is simply a reflex of insecurity inherent in the recurrent process of society’s continual adaptation to change.

For example, when change (positive or negative) demands that the operative processes of a society’s good of order¹⁷² adapt to meet the challenge presented by that particular change, the dominant group directly affected by it may feel threatened and biased against those who support the change; what ensues occurs in order to protect their interests. The group bias acts as a control over social intersubjectivity to the benefit of the group in power¹⁷³ and acts as a censor preventing appropriate insights and ideas that would reveal its own group bias.

Protectionism within the group overtakes any practical insight to promote the welfare of everyone else outside that one group within the larger whole. Thus, the marginalized, the other, the persecuted, become further objectified by the subjective group in power and the prospect of societal development for all becomes thwarted.

¹⁷¹ Kenneth Melchin, *History, Ethics, and Emergent Probability*, (2nd Ed.) (The Lonergan Website, 1999) 219, accessed January 29, 2017, <http://www.lonerganresource.com/book.php?6>

¹⁷² Lonergan’s notion of the ‘good of order’ refers to the concrete functioning and malfunctioning sets of relationships in society that reflect the goods of communal living. “It has a basis in institutions but it is a product of much more, of all the skill and know-how, all the industry and resourcefulness, all the ambition and fellow feeling of a whole people, adapting to each change of circumstance, meeting each new emergency, struggling against every tendency to disorder.” Lonergan, *Method*, 49-50. Also see *Insight*, 619-621.

¹⁷³ See Nancy Ring, “Alienation and Reconciliation,” in Matthew Lamb (ed.), *Creativity and Method: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lonergan* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1981) 256.

American slavery, the German Holocaust, and South Africa's apartheid rule are just three contemporary examples of the brutal effects of group bias. In the case of the American slave trade, the capture and horrifying enslavement of Africans served the economic and cultural interests of wealthy white Americans, whose scotosis—driven by economic greed and colonial classicism—prevented the insights that would have revealed the horror and inhuman domination for what it was: “The social order that has been realized does not correspond to any coherently developed set of practical ideas. It represents the fraction of practical ideas that were made operative by their conjunction with power.”¹⁷⁴

Indeed 21 of the 56 authors of the *American Declaration of Independence* were wealthy slave owners, despite the fact that the second paragraph of the document states that all men (sic) are created equal and endowed with certain inalienable rights including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.¹⁷⁵ In this case, as with the other two mentioned, the oppressive state of legalized slavery was overcome, proving that the emergent formalized structures that reflect a particular point in a society's development can be dismantled. But such dismantling does not guarantee the eradication of the thinking that allowed the structure to emerge in the first place. Therefore, the prevention of a group's bias from recurring is not assured, by any means. Indeed, it can and does continue in other forms.

¹⁷⁴ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 249.

¹⁷⁵ Although this is a fairly well-known fact which is cited in many encyclopedias and scholarly journals, for a concise account, see Stephen Ambrose, “Founding Fathers and Slaveholders” in *Smithsonian Magazine* (Nov. 2002) accessed March 12, 2017, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/founding-fathers-and-slaveholders-72262393/#7xP0Mbko6YjF3IPQ.99>

Of course, this kind of bias is not only employed in such extreme cases but is operative continually throughout all goods of order in less extreme albeit harmful contexts; in short, it characterizes the fabric of social intersubjectivity. As Lonergan notes: “one thinks of the course of social change as a succession of insights, courses of action, changed situations and fresh insights.”¹⁷⁶ Yet, even truly operative insights, or those that will effectuate good for all in society, can be manipulated by the group bias, or selfish interests of one group to their advantage. In fact, the group’s “desires and fears that control and reinforce the questions and insights that are allowed and ridicule every proposed development of social order”¹⁷⁷ contradict the group’s self-interest. The group’s self-motivated desires and insecurities drive which questions are permitted to be asked, thereby influencing which insights will occur; distortion of the group’s particular horizon of meaning inevitably becomes increasingly skewed. The fault of the group bias is its belief that its unique interest *is* a liberty that generates progress, when in fact it effectuates the opposite: quite simply, its beliefs of what actually constitute fact are incomplete ideas.

3.6.1. The Solution to the Group Bias

Lonergan describes history as comprising cycles of progress (or development) and decline, as interconnected—almost countless—systems that reflect a myriad of cultures each with its own unique sets of meanings and values

¹⁷⁶ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 249.

¹⁷⁷ William Mathews, *Lonergan’s Quest: A Study of Desire in the Authoring of Insight* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005) 342.

that constitute the material object of history, which “is the aggregate of human actions, past, present and future: every thought, word and deed of every man.”¹⁷⁸

From this perspective, he viewed history as characterized by three types of human action: acts according to nature (those that are intelligible), acts contrary to nature (those that are unintelligible), and acts beyond nature (those that are too intelligible for the human mind, or supernatural).¹⁷⁹ All such actions either form a cycle of development, or the ideal line of progression as the consequence of integral and constant observance of the natural law, or cause decline which is nothing other than the consequent deviation from natural law (sin).

Since group bias eventually proves to be such a deviation, its own process of aberration causes its very reversal or its cycle of decline to come to an end. Hence, the cycle of decline caused by a group bias is limited or what Lonergan refers to as *short*. “The grotesquely distorted reality” imposed by the biases of the dominant group inevitably become exposed for what they really are—an aberration of common sense on a scale so great that it is seen not only by the oppressed, but other groups beyond the control of the oppressor.”¹⁸⁰ And even within the oppressed group, truth can call out the oppressor.

Such was the case of Martin Luther King during the 1960s and Nelson Mandela from within his 27-year incarceration. While neither may have single-

¹⁷⁸ Bernard Lonergan, “An Outline of the Analytic Concept of History” (Personal Essay, circa 1950s), *Bernard Lonergan Archive*, file #71312DTE030 / A713-12, accessed February 15, 2017, www.bernardlonergan.com

¹⁷⁹ Bernard Lonergan, “An Outline of the Analytic Concept of History”, see previous footnote.

¹⁸⁰ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 250.

handedly overturned the power of the predominant group in their respective countries, their efforts undoubtedly affected concrete positive change for African Americans and South Africans.

The dialectic of oppression discussed by Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is precisely that of group bias enacted by the oppressor to maintain a status quo that continues to subvert the oppressed. In his analysis of the intersubjectivity of the oppressing class and the oppressed, he identifies two motivators for the dominant group within this interplay: self-interest and fear of change. Freire characterizes this construct as cyclical wherein the oppressed rise up against the ruling group in order to claim their humanity and act on the potentiality of a future of freedom.

Freire explains the traits that revolutionary leaders require to overcome the ruling group (humility, understanding of the oppressed group's plight, and cultural communion with them), which he incorporates in his theory of dialogical action.¹⁸¹ In meticulous detail, Freire describes how leaders can enact these characteristics in revolutionary action precisely *not* to become like the leaders of the group who once oppressed them, once the oppressed are liberated. He argues that cultural action either serves the interests of domination (permanence) or those of liberation (change), but either way they operate within established social structures.

Interestingly, he notes that the aim of the revolutionary activity is not to eradicate the original dialectic between permanence and change, for that is

¹⁸¹ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, chapter 4.

impossible since it would mean “the disappearance of the social structure itself...but aims rather at surmounting the antagonistic contradictions of the social structure” through a permanent revolution of liberation. This would be one that involves ongoing education of the people, the reform of social structures, and a permanent commitment to liberation in light of the ever-present permanence-change dialectic of society.¹⁸²

While Freire frequently cites Ché Guevara as an example of dialogical revolutionary leadership and speaks of the necessity of the oppressed group’s self-reflective and critical historical consciousness, in the end, what he offers is a philosophical anthropology of the nature of oppression similar to Lonergan’s notion of the group bias. Freire’s prescribed solution is really a process of continual education of liberated peoples for the purposes of critical self-awareness.

Granted, Freire wrote this book in 1971 and did not address the cyclical reality of revolutionary change, particularly in the cases of failed Marxist revolutions. Not to diminish the influence of his thought and his articulate insights into the psychology of the oppressor and the oppressed, his overall aim is the conscientization of oppressed peoples precisely so they do not become, in turn, “oppressors of oppressors.”¹⁸³

On the other hand, Lonergan argues that this is precisely what happens in contexts of group-bias oppression—that this phenomenon is cyclical, manifested in social dialectic as an ongoing process throughout history. Freedom from bias is

¹⁸² Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 179.

¹⁸³ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 44.

fundamentally a withdrawal from unauthenticity and “the withdrawal is never a permanent achievement.”¹⁸⁴ As such, oppressive states of group bias are overturned, but as Lonergan notes, what replaces them is always based on the same combination of authenticity and unauthenticity: [I]n the measure that the group encouraged and accepted an ideology to rationalize its own behaviour, in the same measure it will be blind to the real situation, and it will be bewildered by the emergence of a contrary ideology that will call to consciousness an opposed group egoism.”¹⁸⁵

What is seen as human development and progress in overcoming the dominant oppressor, even in a revolutionary context, Lonergan casts as the beginning of another cycle of decline, albeit the short one. Kenneth Melchin describes it this way: “Once the marginalized groups come to power their own attempts to structure the whole of society in accordance with the partial insights of their own perspective eventually suffer the same distortions due to the group bias for which their predecessors were ousted.”¹⁸⁶

Due to the fact that a bias is a scotosis or blind spot within one’s consciousness, it neglects ideas that reveal its true nature particularly within a group dynamic. Therefore, as it struggles to remain the dominant power, it increasingly lacks intelligence that allows it to see its emergence within the *larger*

¹⁸⁴ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 252.

¹⁸⁵ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 54.

¹⁸⁶ Kenneth Melchin, *History, Ethics and Emergent Probability: Ethics, Society, and History in the Work of Bernard Lonergan* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987) 220-221.

perspective of history and enables a self-delusion that it self-identifies as a permanent force and unique from previous dominating groups in history.

Ultimately, this lack of intelligence causes its own decline because societal development cannot occur within a system founded on bias. It is incapable of objective self-criticism. As Melchin writes, within the dominant group,

the conditions surrounding the wide-scale genesis of insights and responsible action that seek the good of the whole of society are precluded (i.e., regular experiential contact with the suffering of the marginalized and the habitual raising of questions concerning the relevance of this experience to the restructuring of the whole of society or economy).¹⁸⁷

The dominant group becomes increasingly insular and the process of its decline begins. “There follows an accumulation of surds in the social situation and structure that handicaps the progress” expected by the new power that overcame the old oppressor and “social evils pass from being exceptions to being rules, until the critical stage is reached and decline” reoccurs.¹⁸⁸ The cycle simply continues. Lonergan spoke of the end of the Roman Empire as an example of the result of its own short cycle of decline.¹⁸⁹

But the increasingly insular and limited thinking of the dominant group is not the only contributing factor to its process of decline. As Melchin further notes, the oppressed fail to take action that would promote their own welfare.¹⁹⁰ I believe this

¹⁸⁷ Kenneth Melchin, *History, Ethics and Emergent Probability*, 220.

¹⁸⁸ William Matthews, *Lonergan's Quest*, 91.

¹⁸⁹ See Bernard Lonergan, “Healing and Creating in History,” in *A Third Collection: Papers*, Frederick Crowe (ed.) (New York: Paulist Press, 1985) 107-108.

¹⁹⁰ Kenneth Melchin, *History, Ethics and Emergent Probability*, 220.

point is key to revealing the limits of the more traditional group-bias analysis within the body of critical theory. Indeed, much feminist analysis, including feminist theology, tends to focus on the injustice of oppressive structures caused by the bias of the dominant group to the exclusion of the role of the oppressed in the dialectic of oppression. As such the oppressed are viewed as paralyzed victims and not active agents.

Therefore, when a justice-based solution is offered to uproot the oppressed from their position of subordination, it is based on the assumption that if the structure of domination is removed, the power of the oppressor is thereby neutralized. And once this is done, a standard of what constitutes right living ought then to be applied, or at least strived for.

Yet the same overall structures within that society still exist once the previous sub-structure of oppression is dismantled. For example, Martin Luther King fought for the abolition of racial segregation in the United States. Others also fought for the same objective with the hope that once that structure of oppression was dismantled in the southern United States, African Americans would live a less oppressed life with the goal of eventually experiencing the same rights and social equality as white Americans, or as Shawn Copeland writes, to succeed the “struggle for authenticity [that] is coincident with the human struggle to be human.”¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹ M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 21.

One cannot claim that African Americans now experience social equality on par with white citizens, however, as sociologist Howard Winant argues:

On the one hand, the old verities of established racism and white supremacy have been officially discredited, not only in the United States but fairly comprehensively around the world; on the other hand, racially informed action and social organization, racial identity and race consciousness, continue unchecked in nearly every aspect of social life.¹⁹²

Thus, “the darker your skin is, the more likely you are to be incarcerated, a refugee, an undocumented worker...and if you are a woman, the darker your skin is, the more likely you will bury your infant.”¹⁹³ So despite the incredible gains made by the efforts of the American civil rights movement in the twentieth century, including the dismantling of racist legal and educational systems, one can argue that racism still permeates the social fabric of American culture. In this sense, has the justice-based solution to this particular system of oppression failed or not yet been realized? Rather, can we characterize this group-bias analysis and its justice-based solution in Lonerganian terms as being cyclical?

In explaining dialectical analysis of group bias, Lonergan includes the role of the oppressed, and does not consider them to be free of bias, even though they are victimized. Moreover, the agency of the oppressed plays a key role in his solution to the sin of bias,¹⁹⁴ which I will discuss later in this chapter.

¹⁹² Howard Winant and Michael Omi, “Racial Formation Rules,” in *Racial Formation in the Twenty-First Century*, Daniel Martinez HoSang, Oneka LaBennett, Laura Pulido (eds.) (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012) 318.

¹⁹³ M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 68.

¹⁹⁴ His solution is found in the gift of God’s operative grace. Doran describes this as “The gift is independent of the upward striving of my consciousness ... one becomes free to assume responsibility for what previously one could not negotiate...[and] opens the affective blockages that

This is why, he argues, that even when the oppressed group overcomes the oppressor and comes to power, and its leaders attempt to restructure society, their insights are incomplete — just as distorted as were their predecessors. The mere removal of the structural conditions of oppression does not eradicate it indefinitely since the patterns of the relations of the social order itself still remain. This may explain why racism is still so pervasive in Western society. And while the oppressing group has been removed from dominance, the scotosis of the oppressed, who have since gained power, still exists. Furthermore, their insights into freedom are partial ones.

In summary, while Freire's insistence on the conscientization of the oppressed is valuable and is somewhat similar to Lonergan's notion of self-appropriation toward self-transcendence, history continues to show us the reality where oppression endures despite peaceful or violent revolutionary actions to overcome it.

3.7. General Bias and the Long Cycle of Decline

While Lonergan spoke of four different kinds of bias, it is the general bias of common sense that is the most detrimental for history and the most significant for humanity in terms of theological solutions. Because contextual theologies are praxis oriented,

have prevented the performance of the operations of the creative vector through which direction is found in the movement of life." See Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 243.

any theology concerned with the foundational importance of praxis should engage in a dialectical appropriation of transcendence, not as an exercise in idealist dreaming, but as a concrete orientation critical of social reality in its present alienated condition.¹⁹⁵

So, to begin this section, I will point out the primary difference between the group and general biases, which lies in the type of thinking from which the general bias originates: common sense thinking at the first stage of meaning, concerned with everyday living and everyday issues. It is worth quoting Lonergan's description of the limits of common sense thinking and analysis in the face of the complex problems posed to humanity by history:

The challenge of history is for [us] progressively to restrict the realm of chance or fate or destiny and progressively to enlarge the realm of conscious grasp and deliberate choice. Common sense accepts the challenge, but it does so only partially. It needs to be guided but it is incompetent to choose its guide. It becomes involved in incoherent enterprises. It is subjected to disasters that no one expects, that remain unexplained even after their occurrence, that can be explained only on the level of scientific or philosophic thought, that even when explained can be prevented from recurring only by subordinating common sense to a higher specialization of human intelligence.¹⁹⁶

Therefore, by itself, it cannot conceive of solutions to complex problems that require an integration of knowledge beyond a common-sense horizon of meaning. It is "elementary reasonableness" that looks to the concrete and particular, and in the human being, the full development of common sense outpaces a full development of thinking that appeals to intelligence and reason.¹⁹⁷ It occurs, as

¹⁹⁵ Matthew Lamb, *Solidarity with Victims*, 116.

¹⁹⁶ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 253.

¹⁹⁷ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 250-251.

William Matthews points out, when “common sense rejects the criticism that there are problems beyond its competence.”¹⁹⁸ Thus, its bias is due to its very nature: myopic and disinterested in theory and complexity, and such disinterestedness extends into the refusal of ideas that require long-term complex solutions.

Moreover, the general bias is incapable of self-analysis and is present and active in all. As Doran notes, the general bias is a

personal default of intelligence and freedom for which one is to be held accountable in a more pronounced way: an instrumentalization of reason that perverts the disinterested inquiry through which direction can be found into a quest for expedient control and domination of the process itself by the arbitrary pushing aside of relevant and ultimate but difficult questions.¹⁹⁹

However, it is not just theoretical ideas that the general bias brushes aside, but higher notions of culture, philosophy, and religion, leaving the culture(s) of a society detrimentally uncritical and searching for values that appeal to truth, goodness, and justice. What eventually emerges are societal standards that are left to be directed by legal tribunals.

And, perhaps more importantly, the bias of common sense does not view any dialectic within its particular place and time of history—its horizon includes only the present and the delusion that *it is* controlling and directing history, despite the fact that it is incapable of doing either. Rather, the bias of common sense “ensures

¹⁹⁸ William A. Mathews, *Lonergan's Quest: A Study of Desire in the Authoring of Insight* 343.

¹⁹⁹ Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 235.

that insights essential to the long-term unfolding of the social situation are absent. As a result, the social world becomes cumulatively incoherent.”²⁰⁰

Furthermore, we can see how the scale of values becomes distorted: “As self-transcendence promotes progress, so the refusal of self-transcendence turns progress into cumulative decline.”²⁰¹ The results of these successive cycles form the long cycle of decline causing deterioration of the social situation based on the ever-enlarging general appeal to practical questioning. What then emerges and grows is “a new notion of intelligence itself, which has come to address only the facts as they are, replaces the critical, dialectical and normative functioning of authentic cognitive praxis.”²⁰² And the analysis of complex problems remains incomplete, inaccurate or both.

A case could be made here for the lack of an integrated solution to the environmental crisis facing the world at present. When world leaders refuse to acknowledge the empirical science that characterizes this crisis, their common-sense bias becomes even more pervasive. Coupled with the group bias of the same people, which favours the continuation of the global economic system of greed (e.g., multinational oil corporations), the length of the cycle is exacerbated. With the continued prevention of the desire to ask questions freely and understand the ensuing data, problems that transcend the realm of common sense thinking are pushed even more to the sidelines, leading to further societal decline. Indeed,

²⁰⁰ William Matthews, *Lonergan's Quest*, 344.

²⁰¹ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 55.

²⁰² Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 376.

Lonergan reminds us that the basis of evil and sin is irrationality, which leads us to the devastating implications of the general bias or the long cycle of decline. It is, quite simply, the cumulative distortion of the social and historical order, but one that “cannot be understood and explained in causal terms.”²⁰³

Precisely because the general bias prevents the emergence of insights that would lead to a higher viewpoint that can effectively counter bias and oppression, the problem of such evil in any form inevitably results in human alienation. By this term, Lonergan does not intend the feeling of alienation from society or intersubjective detachment, but quite simply alienation caused by humanity’s “disregard of the transcendental precepts, Be attentive, Be intelligent, Be reasonable, Be responsible.”²⁰⁴

Later in *Method in Theology*, Lonergan speaks of the fifth transcendental precept: Be loving. It is the fivefold disregard that circumvents the emergence of necessary insights. And even when such ideas do emerge, they are prevented from uninterrupted development due to the biases within human structures of operation²⁰⁵ as previously discussed. The cumulative effects of this decline are devastating for society since there is no coherent measure to differentiate between achievement and decline,²⁰⁶ precisely what we have arrived at with the current state of moral relativism. Lonergan argues too that the possibility of a discernible

²⁰³ William Matthews, *Lonergan’s Quest*, 344.

²⁰⁴ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 55.

²⁰⁵ Nancy Ring, “Alienation and Reconciliation,” 258.

²⁰⁶ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 254.

criterion of truth becomes more remote, which we see now as a product of post-modernism, leaving philosophy on its own to navigate relativism.

Charles Taylor asserts that relativism and plurality are based on the individualism of self-fulfillment where the individual sense of morality (however strong or weak) is paramount. The problem with this, he argues, is that the individual value system then overshadows or completely sidesteps larger moral concerns²⁰⁷ including those that appeal to self- and communal- transcendence. Lonergan would argue that such larger moral concerns are discovered through the process of the unrestricted desire to ask all questions that are relevant to a higher integrated solution to such crises as the environment, precisely those questions that are asked in the second and third realms of meaning (theoretical and interiority or subjective self-meaning).

Taylor characterizes the most important value in our North American consumer-based society is that of choice:²⁰⁸ what to buy, which movie to see, which food to eat, where to go on vacation, etc., none of which really are values but are common sense, everyday concerns. Such cumulative neglect of higher valued concerns then feeds into the longer cycle of decline comprising “the succession of less comprehensive viewpoints [or] a succession of adaptations of theory to practice,”²⁰⁹ which ultimately results in nihilism of meaning and value, totalitarianism, and violence. The eventual risk is what Doran refers to as the “post-

²⁰⁷ Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity*, (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1991) 14-16.

²⁰⁸ Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity*, 37-38.

²⁰⁹ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 257.

historic imperialistic and totalitarian possibilities.”²¹⁰ In order to overcome itself, the general bias “has to aim at being subordinated to a human science that thinks on the level of history,” but it is simply unable to recognize the need for such a science.²¹¹

3.7.1. The Solution to the General Bias: Emergent Probability and God’s Grace

Along with two prominent historians, Niall Ferguson and Jared Diamond, author Jane Jacobs wrote convincingly about the decline of the West and the North American way of life. In *Dark Age Ahead*, Jacobs provides a carefully crafted and compelling warning that Western culture faces a dead-end due to a number of societal units that are in decline: the traditional family, the health of communities, the transformation of education into credentialing, historical amnesia, the commitment to the common good, and others. The book concludes with an observation that cannot be discounted: Those societies that have managed to avert complete decline in history are those that have fiercely protected their culture regardless of how close they come to complete decline.²¹²

Doran also speaks at length to the importance of cultural and social integrity based on the concrete unity of certain conditions that inform and shape the intellectual comprehension of its members: conditions that are empirical,

²¹⁰ Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 38.

²¹¹ Robert Doran, “Introductory Lecture Notes on Lonergan’s Insight” Regis College, University of Toronto, September 11, 2003, 59, accessed December 29, 2016, <http://www.lonerganresource.com/course.php?1>

²¹² Jane Jacobs, *Dark Age Ahead* (New York: Random House, 2004) Chapter 8, 161-176. She cites two specific examples: Japan since the late nineteenth century and Ireland in the last several centuries.

dialectical, critical, and normative. Doran argues, based on Lonergan, that to the extent that group and general biases serve to overcome or dominate these conditions, the cultural integrity of a society falls short of intelligibility, goodness, and justice.²¹³ If a society can identify the intelligibility of the needed conditions to be put in place, to complement each other, and to be allowed to be the basis of the future trajectory that would bring about intelligibility, goodness, and justice, will the scale of values of a given society be more structurally secured? Lonergan refers to this course of action as emergent probability.²¹⁴ deliberate conditions that would serve the greater good and justice of a society are set in place as schemes of recurrent events to contribute to the health and growth of the good of order of that society.

Given the presence of an ordered pattern of relationships, there can emerge a whole other-ordered pattern of relationships that was previously not present. Emergent probability seeks to answer this phenomenon as a heuristic framework of how ordered shifts in probabilities within lower-order levels of human meaning can emerge without violating the laws of these lower levels. Lonergan states that this framework “stands above the scotosis of the dramatic subject, above the egoism of the individual, above the bias of dominant and of depressed but militant

²¹³ Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectic of History*, 372-373.

²¹⁴ Lonergan’s notion of Emergent Probability is dense, complex and space and focus of this study allow only a very scant overview of this concept. Hopefully my elementary grasp of it and description here can serve to lay the groundwork for the solution to the general bias. For a fuller explanation, see *Insight*, 146-151, 234-236, 720-721. Also see: Kenneth Melchin, *History, Ethics and Emergent Probability*, specifically chapter 6.

groups that realize only the ideas that they see to be to their immediate advantage.”²¹⁵

Therefore, this requires humanity to knowingly and purposely condition the realm of chance with conscious grasp and directed choice. More specifically, if “...realities are actual intelligibilities known in virtually unconditioned judgments...intelligible connections among the various recurrent human activities [can] be provided by shared mutual understandings of the people involved...to intelligibly coordinate those activities into new schemes.”²¹⁶

Such a framework of capability and potential speaks directly to the ideal of Doran’s notion of a world-cultural humanity where shared diversities serve to build up the good of society. Yet how can this be enacted? Humanity has not done so up to this point in history. How can radical evil and sin be overcome by radical conditions of intelligibility?

The answer has two important features: it is not a wholly human solution (and therefore has significant theological implications) and it does not rely solely on Lonergan’s notion of emergent probability. As Lonergan explains, the solution to the problem of evil primarily rests with God:

The order of this universe in all its aspects and details has been shown to be the product of unrestricted understanding, of unlimited power, of complete goodness. Because God is omniscient, he knows man’s plight. Because he is omnipotent, he can remedy it. Because he is good, he wills to do so. The fact of evil is not the whole story. It also is a problem. Because God exists, there is a further intelligibility to be grasped.²¹⁷

²¹⁵ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 253.

²¹⁶ Patrick Byrne, *The Ethics of Discernment*, 324.

²¹⁷ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 716.

Such intelligibility can be grasped by the human mind. Lonergan argues that the human intelligibility required to understand God's role in bringing about the solution to evil is based on a human science grounded in the norms of intelligence that are critical, dialectical, and normative, and see a higher viewpoint than that which has driven the course of history. Such a grounding is based on the norms of human intelligence, rationality, and responsibility, and involves

...the discovery, the logical expansion, and the recognition of the principle that intelligence contains its own immanent norms and that these norms are equipped with sanctions which [we do] not have to invent or impose.²¹⁸

Furthermore, such a higher viewpoint, which is beyond the scope of the general bias, recognizes that culture cannot be subordinated to the processes of technology, economics, and politics. This higher viewpoint cannot remain floundering within the first level of common sense meaning within human living. It is a science and, as such, must also incorporate the levels of theory and, more importantly, subjective interiority. Doran notes that such a human science recognizes a hierarchy of human values as is presented by Lonergan's scale of values, which serves as the necessary heuristic structure to guide human value appropriation precisely to overcome the state of relativism of our postmodern world.²¹⁹

As previously mentioned, this science of humanity must incorporate three specific capacities. First, it must be critical (to critique history), which it can only be

²¹⁸ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 259.

²¹⁹ Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 378.

free to do within a climate of cultural integrity. It would critique history in order to realize a suitable direction of history: by studying the dialectic of biased opinions of the past and the present. In so doing, it would identify the fact that group bias recurs with regularity, and that because each occurrence ends with its own solution—limited in scope and remedy—there must be a further bias at play that fuels the ongoing history of “competing and escalating imperialisms,”²²⁰ for their continuing emergence in the global world order is not diminished by group bias solutions.

Second, this science would be dialectical in focus as well because if a science is to be intelligible, it must recognize the role of dialectic in intersubjectivity within society and the culture of good and evil, and be able to judge the difference with precision.²²¹

Third, this science would require normativity in its methods precisely in order to reach and maintain an empirical and critical stance that would lead it to recognize the value of the data of human consciousness. Its data must be the data found in the norms of intelligence, rationality, and responsibility.

Such conditions would lay the groundwork to discover what Lonergan refers to as the required remedy on the level of the disease, where the only possible means of discovering a higher viewpoint in human understanding is the discovery of the potential of emergent probability, precisely for the purposes of directing, in a limited fashion, the future. By higher viewpoint, Lonergan does not mean a visual

²²⁰ Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 372.

²²¹ Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 378, and Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 261.

marker, but rather an interconnected group of ideas that can explain the problem. It is a dimension of consciousness, a heightened grasp of history and historical responsibilities. The values and limitations of Marxist analysis and the relativist outcome of the Liberal Enlightenment period are examples of products of partial consciousness and limited data. The higher viewpoint emerges from new ideas and new meanings. This is precisely the work of the third stage of meaning: interiority.

The logic of this solution (as explained thus far) is actually ironic. The search for a higher viewpoint uses the same movement as does the general bias; in this sense, it moves with the general bias. Where a general bias views the practicality of culture as an aggregate of cultures, a higher viewpoint also looks to culture, but one where the common factor is not aggregate sameness but *difference and diversity*. It is based on new ideas and new information. In fact, the inception for the emergence of a higher viewpoint occurs when an inverse insight is realized.

An inverse insight is different from a direct insight; instead of grasping what is there, we grasp what is not there. Lonergan defines an inverse insight as an insight into the absence of an expected intelligibility.²²² In terms of a higher viewpoint in response to the sin of bias, an inverse insight would include the realization that human efforts up to now to eradicate bias and oppression have failed because a viable *human* solution does not exist.

²²² Bernard Lonergan, *Understanding and Being*, 56-58.

We have the positive data of history that proposed solutions to oppressive actions that were perceived to be intelligible and viable (e.g., the efforts of the world community following World War II) were in fact not viable, or constituted short-term limited 'solutions.' Such an inverse insight will indicate that our efforts up to the present may have mitigated the brutal effects of oppression, but that they do not and cannot prevent their reoccurrence. As Lonergan notes, the mind will deliberately withdraw if there is no intelligibility to be sought. However, the significance of the inverse insight is that once it is realized, the door has been opened to pursue an entirely different line of questioning that would not have been previously pursued.

The fact is, however, that there still remains one vital element that has not been introduced into the role of emergent probability in the realization of a higher viewpoint. Previously, I noted that the route to realizing the solution to the general bias, as argued by Lonergan, rests on emergent probability; he also argues that the solution itself is not a human one. What is missing from our discussion thus far is the key required theological element: the role of grace. Lonergan refers to this as special transcendent knowledge, or what God has been doing and continues to do about the problem of evil. In theological terms, how do we acquire this type of knowledge? Theologically, we refer to God's grace as a divine gift, one that is continually offered at every moment. Therefore, it is a gift that we can choose to accept, or not.

But Lonergan argues that, despite our acceptance of this gift, it is not the gift itself that awards us such special transcendent knowledge, but the theological work of understanding what grace is and how it continues to operate in history:

The solution is not just an answer to a problem, but a new and higher integration of [humanity and God's grace], a new level on which human living develops and rejoices, with its own nature and content and meaning and power.²²³

We do not direct grace, God does. As one Lonergan scholar stated, "Nobody tells the Holy Spirit which way to blow."²²⁴ Thus the solution to evil already exists, but in order for us to cooperate with it, we must understand it as an object found at the level of human inquiry. Navigating through that process of unlimited inquiry inevitably leads us to ask questions of ultimate meaning and of God, and of ourselves in terms of the authentic values by which we choose to live.

Lonergan's notion of interiority has been mentioned several times up to this point. It is key to understanding the role it plays in changing human behaviour and the role in navigating special transcendent knowledge. It reveals itself in the third realm of meaning, beyond those of common sense and theory. It is authentic subjectivity that leads to authentic objectivity. The connection between the two is what Lonergan refers to as Generalized Empirical Method (GEM), or the connection between inner conviction and objective truth.²²⁵ In short, GEM

²²³ Robert Doran, "Introductory Lecture Notes on Lonergan's Insight" Regis College, University of Toronto, September 11, 2003, 158, at: <<http://www.lonerganresource.com/course.php?1>>

²²⁴ Carla Mae Streeter, "Theological Categories: The Transposition Needed for Comparative Theology" Presentation to *41st Annual Lonergan Workshop*, Boston College, Boston, MA, June 15-20, 2014.

²²⁵ Bernard Lonergan, "Religious Knowledge," *A Third Collection*, 144.

comprises the conscious, normative operations of attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, and responsibility in the world mediated by meaning and motivated by values. It is worth quoting Lonergan at length on this point:

One has first to attend to one's attending, not how spontaneously it fixes upon what gives delight, promises pleasure, threatens danger...Secondly, one has to advert to one's own intelligence...[which] brings to light a primitive and basic meaning of the word, normative, for the intelligence in each of us prompts us to seek understanding, to be dissatisfied with a mere glimmer, to keep probing...[T]hirdly, attending to one's own reasonableness reveals an equally primitive and basic but complementary type of normativeness. Ideas are fine, but no matter how bright, they are not enough...Finally, there is the normativeness of our deliberations. Between necessity and impossibility lies the realm of freedom and responsibility. Because we are free, we also are responsible, and in our responsibility we may discern another prompted and basic instance of normativeness. It is, so to speak, the reasonableness of action.²²⁶

In satisfying one's conscious and subjective advertence to these four recurrent operations of the mind, one then becomes objective and authentic in terms of the values one chooses to live by. This is the basic platform of Lonergan's ethical intentionality, which can be applied to any data of human living and ultimately would culminate in the data of religious or special transcendent knowledge. This notion speaks precisely to how Lonergan viewed the prime difference between the goals of philosophy and theology. In his lecture notes on *Intelligence and Reality*²²⁷ (circa 1950s), he wrote that philosophy makes

²²⁶ Bernard Lonergan, "Religious Knowledge," *A Third Collection*, 143.

²²⁷ Bernard Lonergan, "Intelligence and Reality" (Lectures Notes, circa 1950s), *Bernard Lonergan Archive*, file #10400DTE050 / A104 accessed January 15, 2017, <http://www.bernardlonergan.com>

possible knowledge of the universe, and plans for the good of the universe, the unleashing of vast human energies in the execution of such plans, attainment of such ideals...Without successful philosophy, actual and objective self-knowledge is extremely precarious.

Yet the human mind also experiences tremendous tension between existing as the subject of that universe and possessing “the pure desire to know” beyond what philosophy can discover. Lonergan continues his lecture notes: “Still philosophy does not provide final answer...Man can conceive an ideal for individual and society, but he cannot execute it, [there is the] Necessity of grace.”²²⁸ For Lonergan, philosophy is necessary but ultimately is to be sublated by theology.

Thus, the existential process to fuller interiority, or self-appropriation, driven by the pure desire to know does not culminate in philosophical knowledge of oneself and the universe, but in special transcendent knowledge of God’s love flooding our hearts to bring us out of a secular or philosophically-based value system. The first step in this process is breaking through the “alienated self-understandings and self-valuing that have prevailed thus far” or, as Lonergan notes, deciding what we are to make of ourselves.²²⁹

This is difficult, for the understandings and values in our life are already coloured and conditioned by the biases we have encountered, particularly the

²²⁸ Note that because these are Lonergan’s lecture notes and not formal, edited text, words such as articles are missing. I have presented his words as the original text, except for the last phrase.

²²⁹ Patrick Byrne, *The Ethics of Discernment*, 298.

dramatic bias caused by trauma or violence.²³⁰ This can be an extremely difficult step for one who has experienced, say, a personal violence that has deeply affected their physical and mental well-being, even more so when augmented by an oppressive context.

A second step is required for fuller self-appropriation, which begins when one follows up on the multitude of questions that arise following the previous step and the existential realization that one is a chooser (or decider) in life. In so doing, we also choose value(s) that define us and how those values relate to those that should exist in the world around us. As Byrne explains,

Knowing ourselves factually as choosers who are self-determining, therefore, is an extension of self-affirmation from knowledge of the experiences of knowing to knowledge of the experiences of the acts of choosing.²³¹

Indeed, they are distinct acts. And treating these processes as unlimited in scope leads one to the unrestricted notion of value and how that realization influences one's personal value and personal responsibility. Fuller and fuller self-appropriation transpires in self-acceptance. Self-objectivity is reached, Lonergan argues, through the three fundamental forms of conversion: the intellectual, moral, and religious.

²³⁰ Robert Doran has written extensively on the dramatic bias and the life-limiting effects of trauma and violence-induced bias on the psychic level of human consciousness. See Doran, *Psychic Conversion and Theological Foundations*, (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2006).

²³¹ Patrick Byrne, *The Ethics of Discernment*, 298-299.

“To attempt to ensure objectivity apart from self-transcendence only generates illusions.”²³²

When Lonergan speaks of conversion, it is important to note that he does not mean the type of conversion moment most often characterized in popular media such as converting to a new religion or experiencing a profound revelation. While the conversion process, in Lonergan’s thought, may encompass such an experience, he intends much more as he treats both the notions of being and value as transcendental; rather, it involves the process described previously, as a process of discernment that leads to a radical decision that responds to the tensions in our horizons of feelings.

Intellectual conversion builds upon self-affirmation and the decision to comply more fully with the demands of cognitional structure. Moral conversion speaks to the decision to cooperate with the dynamic unlimited structure of ethical intentionality by aligning one’s horizon of feelings according to the objective scale of values. And religious conversion, as Lonergan so beautifully puts it, is a decision for “total and permanent self-surrender without conditions, qualifications, reservations” to living as a being-in-love with God.²³³

He explains that the significance of religious transcendence is that it serves as the affective foundation for all self-transcendence in seeking truth, the hierarchy of values for human living, and opens up a horizon that extends far beyond one’s

²³² Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 338. For a fuller discussion of conversions, see: Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 237-242 and Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 79, 150-153.

²³³ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 240.

immediate concerns to the universe as a whole. The conversion process in general constitutes “normative responses to objective values as they are intended in unrestricted value questioning and unrestricted being-in-love” as Byrne explains.²³⁴

It also constitutes an ongoing *subjective* process of decision making toward objective, authentic living. For the religiously converted consciousness, it forms an entirely new basis of human living that includes all valuing and all doing good, effectively subsuming the fruits of the other two conversions:

Religious conversion is being grasped by ultimate concern. It is other-worldly falling in love. It is total and permanent self-surrender, not as an act, but as a dynamic state that is prior to and principle of subsequent acts.²³⁵

Although it is common among different religious traditions and interpreted differently, for the Christian, it effectuates Christ’s commandment in John 13:34, “As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” Translated into everyday human living, it means enacting beliefs and actions that return love in the face of hate. Lonergan also described this often in his earlier writings as the proximate ground that would be the habit of charity. As dialectic, the joy of the love of God overcomes evil both by meeting it with good and by using it to reinforce the good.

The role of interiority, at the third stage of meaning, is the catalyst in conversions. Interiority, if you will, sets the stage for larger, more complex moral issues in life to be considered beyond the realms of common sense and theory. There is a liberty that is experienced in this stage of meaning, which Lonergan

²³⁴ Patrick Byrne, *The Ethics of Discernment*, 224.

²³⁵ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 240.

refers to as effective freedom, that allows for the correct understanding of what the value of the good authentically is within a good of order.

Furthermore, the turn to interiority in this respect allows one to develop those capacities and virtues that are required to meet the moral obligations required of ethical living on any scale. It also means that one views how the roles and responsibilities, skills, and capacities can be cultivated with regularity within the same good of order.

What does this mean for the theologian? There are three key implications. First, the interiorly differentiated consciousness of the theologian does not blindly accept tradition and doctrine, nor place them within a narrow undifferentiated hermeneutic of history, but questions them in the context of the day along with contemporary debates in scholarship.

Second, conversions cannot help but re-situate one's fundamental commitments and orientations, and they reflect the uniqueness of the individual. As such, there is no fixed pattern. What is certain, however, is that the degree to which the theologian is authentically self-appropriated will determine how he or she carries out theological work:

The determination of what is appropriate to the tradition and of what is intelligible in the situation depends on one's appropriation of both the traditions and the situation. And these appropriations are grounded in one's position on the constitutive elements of religious, moral, cognitive and aesthetic integrity or authenticity. The self-appropriating and self-transcending subject in love with God is the ultimate arbiter of all direct theological discourse...Both of these elements become the radical bases of direct systematic theological discourse only through the processes of explanatory self-appropriation that bring one into articulate possession of oneself as a subject of precisely those

operations and states through which one transcends oneself to reality.²³⁶

When theological tasks are performed by one who is converted, these same tasks are being performed by a different sort of self than when performed by one who is not converted. Self-appropriation in terms of Lonergan's intentionality analysis means *objectification* of one's own *subjective* conversion, which allows one to deal with the data of consciousness in addition to the data of sense.

Third, in terms of emergent probability, the theologian bears a responsibility regarding the mediation between a cultural matrix and the meanings and values that can be appropriated according to the tradition and doctrine of Catholicism. This responsibility involves a contribution to an emerging set of meanings and values that appeals to the search for a higher viewpoint of human living.²³⁷ Religious conversion reverses knowledge of love, as it affects a change so profound in one that love precedes knowledge, as Lonergan says:

our love reveals to us values we had not appreciated, values of prayer and worship, or repentance and belief. But if we would know what is going on within us, if we would learn to integrate it with the rest of our living, we have to inquire, investigate, seek counsel. So it is that in religious matters love precedes knowledge and, as that love is God's gift, the very beginning of faith is due to God's grace.²³⁸

²³⁶ Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 143-144.

²³⁷ Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 502.

²³⁸ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 122-123.

Therefore, as in the first two post-Enlightenment historical phases of the *turn to the subject*, that of the transcendental-idealist phase of Kant and Hegel and the dialectical-materialist phase of Marx, Lonergan's turn to the subject also calls for responsible freedom of humanity in oppressive and dialectical contexts. However, his turn to the subject resists, in fact overcomes, the theoretical dualisms that grew out of such schools of thought (e.g., behaviourism versus humanism, determinism of the empirical natural sciences versus voluntaristic decisionism).²³⁹

In the place of these dichotomies, Lonergan's theoretical heuristic structure of GEM shows us the complementary nature of empirical methods of discovery and the operations of consciousness already at play that dialectically discern the values and disvalues evident in that discovered data—in ourselves and the structures of the world we inhabit. With GEM, Lonergan presented the theoretical structure of cognitive performance based on the primordial operations of consciousness (questioning) that lead to knowledge that leads to action. This illustrates faithful adherence to the discovery of what we do when we know through the four transcendental precepts that serve as the cognitive operations of attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, and responsibility. Yet Lonergan adds a fifth transcendental precept that exposes the values and meanings operative in authentic transcendent living at the third stage of meaning: be loving. For one simply cannot be truly authentic in human living and not be loving.

²³⁹ Matthew Lamb, "Praxis and Generalized Empirical Method," in *Creativity and Method*, 56-59.

Ultimately, faithfulness to GEM leads to authentic interiority, the intersubjectivity of the human good and, more importantly, leads to faithfulness in loving God at the apex of the scale of values. The relevant correlations of what we discover to be the good in us and the world in which we live directly reflect and affect the three dialectics of any society: the objects of our interest in intersubjective living, the structures that constitute our intersubjective living, and ultimately our decisions of whom and what to love as worthwhile.

In authentic persons, responsible and effective acts influence intelligent operations of consciousness, which then shape spontaneous living. This hierarchy in intentionality effectuates a priority of cultural values over social structures and social structures over the vital values operative in everyday human living. Therefore, GEM places human intelligence and reason as the foundation of moral and affective orientations. In the religiously-converted consciousness, the value of love in action becomes the highest priority of living and the ultimate goal of a theological method.

Love of God is not only the highest value in human living, but also becomes an emergent probability when we attempt to rationally understand how grace, as God's continual and deliberate action in human living, operates. Lonergan argues that when we begin to see grace as operative and ongoing in human history, we can better cooperate with it to effectuate the emergent conditions that could lead to the higher viewpoint that is the solution to the problem of evil. Thus, the gift of grace and the act of charity, although related, are not one and the same. The former is distinguished from the habit of charity as explicated in Lonergan's *De Deo*

trino, where he affirms supernatural realities: the *esse secundarium* of the Incarnation, sanctifying grace, the habit of charity, and the light of glory.²⁴⁰

The significance of this distinction lies in Lonergan's lengthy explanation of the heuristic structure of the solution to evil that comprises Chapter 20 of *Insight*. Therein he explains that the solution itself will be absolutely supernatural (divinely originated from God) *and* will involve a transcendence of humanism. At this point, the term supernatural as used by Lonergan requires further clarification, which we find in his distinction between reason and faith. In his discussion in *Insight* on metaphysics as science,²⁴¹ Lonergan traces the history of reason to the demand for method in metaphysics during the period of medieval theology:

The twelfth century was oppressed with an apparently insoluble problem: with the necessity of distinguishing between divine grace and human freedom, and at the same time an inability to conceive either term without implying the other.²⁴²

This distinction was studied by successive theologians until Aquinas completed the formulation with a full theological application of the natural order and the supervening gratuitous order. But as Lonergan argues, reason and faith do not just pertain to the delimitations of the theologian's object of study; rather, the relationship stands as

an invitation to reason to grow in consciousness of its native power, to claim its proper field of inquiry...to determine its own method...on

²⁴⁰ Bernard Lonergan, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: The Triune God: Systematics*. Robert Doran and Daniel Monsour (eds.), (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007) 471-475.

²⁴¹ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, Chapter 16.

²⁴² Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 550.

the strong ground of the possibility of questioning and with full awareness of the range of possible answers.²⁴³

It is faith, as complement to reason, that enlarges that possibility infinitely. And as Lonergan further notes: “faith is knowledge born of religious love.”²⁴⁴ Once again we see the necessity of theology subsuming philosophy.

Therefore, if faith is a type of knowledge and knowledge as reasoned through the transcendental precepts can point to emergent conditions that will serve to allow humanity to discover a solution to evil that rests within a higher viewpoint, and if that solution, as Lonergan argues, is wholly supernatural, then the divine-human relationship becomes absolutely critical for the effectuation of the solution to the general bias. The effectuation is not just the outcome of reasoned emergent conditions leading to its eventual outcome, but precisely those conditions that are effectuated from the theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity. It is these conjugate forms that enable one to act within the solution that is *already* presented by the force of God’s operative grace, as it has been throughout human history:

[To] enable man to achieve sustained development on the human level inasmuch as they reverse the priority of living over the knowledge needed to guide life and over the good will needed to following knowledge.²⁴⁵

²⁴³ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 551.

²⁴⁴ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 115.

²⁴⁵ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 750.

These acts are the catalysts that enable us to participate in a “divinely sponsored collaboration in the transmission and application of the truths of the solution.”²⁴⁶

In terms of theological method, the significance of the solution to the problem of the general bias of common sense is primarily that the solution itself, principally the work of God, is not a *fix-it* type of solution that is sought through a group bias analysis. With the solution as described here, justice solutions to oppression do not speak to the root of the problem. Rather, with grace-infused acts of charity, hope, and love, justice becomes an inevitable, derivative result of a larger, more comprehensive solution, which is divine love in the face of evil. Thus, the solution of justice cannot answer the question of what can humanity do to eradicate the sin of oppression.

Reasoned faith, within theological praxis, must inevitably point to another question: What can humanity do, *in conjunction with God*, to discover a lasting solution to the problem of evil and oppression in order to reverse the long cycle of sin, while we are living in the continued state of injustice? If one conceives of the problem and solution as Lonergan has presented to us as being beyond the limits of critical theory, theology, then, “must be a work of grace, as well as a reflection on grace.”²⁴⁷

Granted, this line of argument evokes a key criticism or concern. In the search for the adoption and implementation of a higher viewpoint that enacts

²⁴⁶ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 750.

²⁴⁷ Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 525.

fidelity to the integral scale of values, as Doran notes, what is to prevent that substantive fidelity (however sincere) from adopting the malevolent values to which Marx reacted? In other words, what is to prevent our belief in the search for the beautiful, intelligible, good, and true from suffering the same fate that befalls all ideological revolutions?

In Lonergan's critique of Marx, he did not discount Marx's chief complaint of injustice. Indeed, Freire held up Guevara as the archetypal leader who truly understood the needs and wishes of the oppressed. Yet, certainly within the example of the Cuban Revolution, victory and effective freedom for the people were never realized beyond the short term: "How can a new synthesis of faith and culture, which, after all, is ultimately what we are anticipating, do justice to the issues raised by Marx and his followers?"²⁴⁸

Doran offers us three valid reasons why a new synthesis, based on the intersubjectivity of humanity and God (as described above), would break with history. First, he notes the emergence of the religious realm of meaning into its anthropological and soteriological components. Put another way, this is the difference between humanity concerned enough with its perilous future that it reaches out for God and humanity's explicit acknowledgement that God has been, all along, reaching out for us. It is precisely this revelation that differs from any previously held cognitive, intellectual, and noetic illumination that a human being has experienced. It is, again, the work of God: "The salvation offered by

²⁴⁸ Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 554-558.

Jesus...counteracts the forces that block our access to the experience of redemptive grace."²⁴⁹

Second, classical political theories quite simply do not see the centrality and comprehensive nature of the problem of sin. Therefore, as has been discussed here at length, a higher viewpoint, realized based on emergent conditions that place humanity in intimate companionship with God, would view the problem of sin in its entirety including the presence and effects of the general bias of common sense thinking.

Finally, an enduring good of order supported by the integrity of the scale of values cannot be upheld if the higher values of the cultural, personal, and religious levels condone a distorted dialectic or social illusion. The Christian soteriological differentiation provides an incarnate measure of integrity, as Doran explains, subsuming humanity's selfish concerns and lifting it out of a state of relativism into a state of grace.

A state of grace, one that already exists in history, invites us to live guided by the theological virtues. The implications of this for the present moment encompass a horizon of human living that recognizes the value of justice-based solutions to the group bias but does not rest its unrestricted inquiry into a higher viewpoint and solution at that level. It directs us (including the theologian) to be the subjective agents of change, fueled by self-sacrificing love, through treating the victim as an agent of change and the oppressor as the victim. Casting the victim as

²⁴⁹ Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 557.

merely powerless and the oppressor as evil cannot be done through the divine lens of Christ.

In conclusion to this chapter, the methodology of critical theologies in general limit the possibilities of enduring solutions unless they are placed within a larger heuristic framework. This framework includes a far deeper turn to the subject that appeals to the third stage of meaning: interiority through the process of self-appropriation leading to conversions of the mind (intellectual), of one's moral agency (moral), and the heart (religious).

Such a framework for analysis will yield a far more comprehensive result, as opposed to a short-term solution: individually on the level of the theologian and communally in terms of humanity's future in communion with God. Guided by authentic interiority, the possibility of realizing a viable higher viewpoint in response to sin can be gained given the appropriate emergent conditions that will point in its direction. One step on that road requires cognitive practices geared toward self-discernment.

Moreover, a characteristic of contextual theologians is the concern for the oppressed which leads us toward professional problem solving that seeks expedient solutions to the world's problems. Perhaps in doing so we tend to overshadow the *theo* with the *ology*, yet Lonergan reminds us that we are not meant to bring about just living on our own.

We are well aware of the human capacity regarding the good and bad in human living. Yet, we need to be reminded about the dynamic quality of the relationship between the human and divine capacities to create and that it is only

the act of divine creating that can create something out of nothing. Lonergan speaks of the divine healing vector whose trajectory is from above downwards to humanity. Or to characterize it another way, it is the divine grace of God that continually surrounds us working with us where we are, but that we do not always recognize or acknowledge.

Yet it is precisely because of this divine presence working in our world that we are able to see that “love breaks the bonds of psychological and social determinisms with the conviction of faith and the power of hope.”²⁵⁰ The simple point that Lonergan makes is that we cannot develop as a species *on our own* to eradicate bias and oppression. Furthermore, if there has been no healing presence or operative grace throughout history, human history would be merely one of cumulative and progressive fatalism. Rather we are still witness to the powerful mediation of grace as a divine gift that “is an unconditional love that lets our victimized darkness rest in being loved” and paves the way for a new creative movement in our injured consciousness.²⁵¹

In this chapter I have sought to explicate Lonergan’s notion of bias, specifically that of the group bias and the general bias as well as the solutions to both. In doing so, I began with the context of cognitive biased thought, that of the realm of common sense thinking and how it relates to the subject, and various patterns of human experience.

²⁵⁰ Bernard Lonergan, “Healing and Creating in History”, in Frederick Crow (ed.) *A Third Collection: Papers* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985) 106.

²⁵¹ Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* 242.

In this section, my aim was to illustrate how Lonergan's approach to oppression distinguishes itself from the more traditional and common approach to bias and oppression that exists within the overall body of critical theory. The chapter then culminated with the role of subjective interiority, Lonergan's notion of self-appropriation, which helps to lead one vertically on the scale of values of human living toward religious conversion, and living and loving objectively within a state of grace, which propels the subject in acts of outward love and compassion toward the needed higher viewpoint as a response to sin.

I now turn to a more detailed discussion of how a Lonerganian general bias analysis of oppression brings to light the limitations of a critical theory approach in order to transcend a group bias heuristic of analysis toward a deeper, more precise interpretation of the dialectic itself. In chapter Four, I turn to three Lonerganian scholars whose work highlights this particular point.

Chapter 4. Dialectical Analysis: How the Group and General Biases Reinforce Each Other

The soul, who is lifted by a very great and yearning desire for the honor of God and the salvation of souls, begins by exercising herself, for a certain space of time, in the ordinary virtues, remaining in the cell of self-knowledge, in order to know better the goodness of God towards her. This she does because knowledge must precede love, and only when she has attained love, can she strive to follow and to clothe herself with the truth.

- Saint Catherine of Siena, *Dialogue*²⁵²

4.1. Introduction

Lonergan does not analyze human dialectic from the perspective of an either/or account of the group and general biases. Rather, by recognizing the existence of both, he argues that they serve to reinforce each other, amplifying their respective effects. Hence, he employs a comprehensive approach to dialectical analysis that looks beyond the scope of analyses carried out by critical theorists and contextual theologians, as that remains incomplete in not recognizing and taking into account the effects of the general bias throughout history and the high and low tides of the long cycles of decline.

This chapter serves to explain: 1. how the group and general biases reinforce each other, and 2. that since a Lonerganian dialectical analysis includes the identification and analysis of the presence of the general bias in any historical dialectic, it thereby reveals the limits of a critical theory approach with its inherent group-bias framework of study.

Lonergan seeks to take us a step beyond what more traditional critical theory analyzes. This chapter will attempt to explain how he does this by focusing

²⁵² Saint Catherine of Siena, *Dialogue*, Algar Thorold (Trans.), (New York: Cosimo, Inc., 2007) 26.

on the relevant work of Robert Doran, Matthew Lamb, and Patrick Byrne, all of whom are advanced in their understanding and application of Lonergan's thought. These three scholars offer critiques of critical theory in that they assess dialectic from a Lonerganian perspective with regard to the limits of critical theory applications to contexts of human oppression.

I will set the stage by exploring the intersection of the group and general biases within dialectical analysis, attempting to highlight the need of the theologian to examine the damaging effects of the general bias. Then I will proceed to explicate the respective work of these scholars regarding the limits of critical theory. Finally, I will attempt to explain with some precision how a general bias analysis introduces a critique of the limitations of a critical theory approach with its inherent group-bias framework of analysis.

What becomes evident in this approach is the value not only of the analysis carried out regarding these two types of bias, but the value of the theologian's shift to self-appropriation (meaning constituted on the level of interiority), which constitutes an openness to divine grace as operative in ourselves. It is precisely this process that allows the dialectical theologian to recognize the presence of the general bias in one's own work and thereby to *correct* its distortion on the personal and professional realms of one's life, enabling the shift from meaning constituted on the level of common sense (where the general bias operates) to the level of theory and beyond.

As we will see later in this chapter, Lonergan characterizes this shift from common sense to theory and then to interiority within the third realm of meaning,

via the process of self-appropriation, as a shift from focusing solely on a bipolar dialectic to a tripolar dialectical analysis that brings about a deeper and more meaningful analysis of the context in question.

This, along with the previous chapter, will constitute the theoretical foundation for my contention that a Lonerganian analysis in this regard advances the methodologies of feminist theologies.

4.2. The Intersection of the Group and General Biases and the Long Cycle of Decline

As Lonergan describes it, the longer cycle of decline seems somewhat intangible. How can we envision this cycle and how long can it really span in relation to human history, particularly when our current world is defined by speed, efficiency, and immediacy? Michael Shute aptly puts this challenge in perspective for us:

The time frame on CNN is the 24-hour news cycle, though some 'crises' last a little longer. Stock markets revolve around a 24-hour cycle. Fashion changes each season. For business, long-term thinking often means meeting quarterly or annual report targets...Generational shifts are now calculated in ten-year spans, a remarkable acceleration. Cultures may last much longer and civilizations even longer still, yet in the timeframe of evolution we are a very young species and all of human history is a thin slice of the latest projected age of the universe at 13.772 ± 0.059 billion years. It is generally thought that *Homo sapiens sapiens* emerged about 200,000 years ago in Africa. This means in the whole process of evolution to date our species has been present for approximately 0.000014522219% of that timeframe.²⁵³

²⁵³ Michael Shute, "Functional Collaboration as the Implementation of Lonergan's Method, Part 2: 'How Might We Implement Functional Collaboration?'" *Journal of Macrodynamic Analysis* 8 (2015), 94.

Ironically, it would seem that the actual timespan of the universe itself is in reverse proportion to the depth of the meaning of humanity's history within it. Moreover, in recent decades, time seems to be marked increasingly more by expediency and *inordinate* speed: with the advent of the internet, the instantaneity of access to information (much of it uncritical, non-theoretical, and driven by common sense concerns) and its use as a global platform for instant gratification and entertainment, one can rightly ask whether we are indeed traversing a long cycle of decline, and how much longer will it be. Lonergan foresaw this question when he wrote of the perilous nature of the postmodern society:

On an earth made small by a vast human population, by limited natural resources, by rapid and easy communications, by extraordinary powers of destruction, there will arise sooner or later the moment when the unstable equilibrium will seem threatened and the gamble of war will appear the lesser risk to some of the parties involved. If the war is indecisive, the basic situation is unchanged. If it is totally destructive, the longer cycle has come to its end. If there results a single world empire, then it inherits both the objective stagnation of the social surd and the warped mentality of totalitarian practicality...[and] it has no enemy to fight; it has no intelligible goal to attain.²⁵⁴

It may seem surprising that Lonergan wrote this description sometime during the years leading up to the publication of *Insight* in 1957, as it could just as well describe the current global climate today. But as Lonergan reminded us, the potential of such an outcome for humanity becomes even greater when the group and general biases overlap and complement each other. Qualifying this outcome in cosmological terms or within the larger framework of human historicity is not

²⁵⁴ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 257.

possible in this study, yet by discussing Lonergan's approach to classicist thought, one can get a glimpse of how both types of biases reinforce each other in this regard.

However it's important to point out that Lonergan did not equate classicist thought and classicism with classical theology. While he often used the term 'classicism' in discussions that critiqued the Church's retrenchment in response to its need to transition into a more historically conscious approach to modernism, he believed that there is much in classical theology that warrants retrieval, particularly within the postmodern context. In fact, his benchmark motto was *vetera novis augere et perficere* (to enlarge and complete the old with the new). So, to be clear on this point, Lonergan was not an advocate for a retrieval or overreliance on classicist thought as the standard for human living in the post-modern age, yet he did believe that certain elements of classical theology could complement the evolving context of human living. Thus, my aim my aim with the forthcoming section is to place the notion of value (from Lonergan's scale of values) within his discussion of two approaches of historical thought: classicism and historical consciousness. I do this to illustrate how the group and general biases reinforce each other and actually accelerate the long cycle of decline.

Then I wish to relate how appropriating the ability to identify and shift between Lonergan's first three realms of meaning enrich one's appreciation of the difference between his two approaches to historical thought. This occurs precisely because when one traverses the process of interiority within the third realm of

meaning, one gains the proficiency to identify and differentiate between the group and general biases and discern how they actually function within human living.

If we begin with the absolute opposite of self-destructive finality, then we wish the highest standard of all ethical living as our ultimate goal: vertical finality of love where human “appetite responds because the motive is good; if, and only if, process is orientated because the term is good.”²⁵⁵ Lonergan wrote this statement in reference to Aristotle’s notion of true friendship, noting that Aristotle made a methodological error by defining virtue empirically and thereby ruling out discussion of an absolute good. This meant, according to Lonergan, that Aristotle’s notion of true friendship excluded

the logical and the ontological first in his ethical theory: for it is only in a tendency to an absolute that one can transcend both egoism and altruism; and such transcendence is implicit in the Aristotelian notion of true friendship with its basis not in pleasure nor in advantage but in the objective loveliness of the virtuous man...²⁵⁶

This involves an absolute good leading to love of God above all. Therefore, if we use this notion of the absolute good as the ultimate goal of vertical finality, we can also hold it as the benchmark for all ethical living.

A significant aspect to ethical living for Lonergan focused on his understanding of the idea of ‘*humanum*,’ which cannot be appreciated adequately without grasping his notion of historical consciousness and the significance of how

²⁵⁵ Bernard Lonergan, “Finality, Love and Marriage,” in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: Collection*. Frederick Crowe and Robert Doran (Eds), (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988) 19.

²⁵⁶ Bernard Lonergan, “Finality, Love and Marriage,” 25.

it differs from human historicity situated firmly within a classicist framework, as well as how meaning is constituted and appropriated in both. Briefly, Lonergan viewed the appropriation of historical consciousness as occurring “when there is grasped the relevance of human intelligence and wisdom to the whole of human life. Then the entire fabric of the whole of human existence appears as a historical product.”²⁵⁷ The grasp of human historicity in this manner becomes particularly acute when one assumes the ability to differentiate meaning within the realms of theory and interiority in contrast to the realm of common sense meaning. I will return to this point shortly.

In terms of the significance of historical consciousness, Kenneth Melchin offers a succinct description:

Historical consciousness has its roots in the scientific revolution and has given rise to a different way of understanding knowledge and the processes of pursuing knowledge. Previously, the ideal of knowledge was the certainty that is achieved in logic. With science, however, this ideal changed. Knowledge is now pursued empirically, through attention to evidence and verification. This changes our ways of thinking about society, politics, cultures and economies. Previously, culture was understood normatively, in terms of a single ideal that we supposed all women and men aspired towards achieving. Now, we regard cultures empirically, as presenting different ways of organizing life, each with its own set of ideals.²⁵⁸

Although it was a concept discussed most notably by Schleiermacher,

Dilthey, Heidegger, and later at length by Gadamer, Lonergan’s use of the term was more precise and central to his entire view of history. To be aware, to consider

²⁵⁷ Lonergan, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: Topics in Education*, Frederick Crowe and Robert Doran (eds.), (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993) 76.

²⁵⁸ Kenneth Melchin, “The Church and the Modern World: The Challenge of Historical Consciousness,” Seminar Presentation, 2014-15 *Vatican II Research Centre Seminar Series, A Sure Compass: Receiving Vatican II Today*, Saint Paul University, Ottawa, January 20, 2015.

one's spatial and temporal place of existence in relation to the past that has shaped the conditions leading to one's existence, is to work toward understanding the meaning of one's life. And asking such existential questions inevitably involves asking historical questions.

Yet historical consciousness is more than self-awareness of one's particular place in history or time; it encompasses human action—the person as “spirit, subject, knower, chooser, and ultimately agent,” all as part of the development of one's intentional order and driver of meaning in one's life, one's culture and society, and the larger world.²⁵⁹ Such meanings develop over time through purposeful action and inaction. For Lonergan, historical consciousness reflected not just humanity's development with respect to meaning and achievement, but also what has been overlooked and not developed, what is limited.

Lonergan juxtaposed this notion of evolving history and meaning with the classical notion of culture that arose from the Aristotelean notion of man in his society, where culture is fixed, normative, unchanging, and where the concern is the rule and standard of the good, the true, and the beautiful. In this way the goal of human living was to strive to reach that standard in all its realms. It was the norm, the universal. This is not to say that the classical notions of human life were wrong or misguided; as Lonergan noted, “classical culture is not something to be sniffed at; it ran the world from the fifth century B.C. to the French Revolution.”²⁶⁰

²⁵⁹ Bernard Lonergan, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: Early Works on Theological Method 1*, Robert Doran and Robert Croken (eds.), (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010) 242.

²⁶⁰ Bernard Lonergan, *Early Works on Theological Method 1*, 73.

Yet its chief concern was the norm, the law, *what ought to be*, where human nature was treated as fixed and unchanging despite the ongoing change in meaning mediated by cultural evolution and affected by historical events, location, human decision, diversity, and bias. However, “on classicist assumptions there is just one culture. That one culture is not attained by the simple faithful, the natives, the barbarians.”²⁶¹

There were limits to this type of worldview particularly in how it viewed man in the world: as a complex being governed by permanent and universal rules where he was not the subject;²⁶² rather, mankind was to be controlled. It also viewed humanity in terms of hierarchy, with man as the greater sex. But, within this perspective, man can only be viewed generally, not individually or uniquely. Moreover, in this construct, the meanings of life become fixed, when in reality they are constantly changing. Such classicist thinking sets the conditions for the rigidity of fixed notions of tradition and universal culture where meaning is also controlled as truth, which, I think Lonergan would argue, have served as conditions that have contributed to religious wars, conquests, imperialism, and the inordinate weight the Church has placed on Catholic tradition and its reluctance to question fixed notions within doctrine.

In *Method in Theology*, Lonergan explains this point in a discussion on dogma where he notes that dogma has permanence in meaning because it was

²⁶¹ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 326.

²⁶² I purposefully refer to ‘man’ here, as opposed to man and woman, as the classicist notion of humanity really referred only to men.

revealed by God, but he also reminds us that dogmatic statements only have meaning *within their specific contexts*. Furthermore, the contexts of human living are ever-changing:

Truths can be revealed in one culture and preached in another...they may be revealed in the styles and fashion of differentiations of consciousness, defined by the church in the style and fashion of another differentiation, and understood by theologians in a third. What permanently is true, is the meaning of the dogma in the context in which it was defined.²⁶³

So while Lonergan was critical of classicist thinking, he firmly believed that it reflected truth as expressed in divinely revealed mysteries, but that the historicity of such truths must be understood within the present context: "What ended classicist assumptions was critical history. What builds the bridges between the many expressions of the faith is methodical theology."²⁶⁴

So, given the modern turn to the subject, as natural inquirer, leads to authentic and meaningful change in conjunction with technological advances, innovations, and insights. And so, such a shift requires a different worldview from the Aristotelian one, one that sees humanity in the larger picture of the evolution of cultural history, a history wherein humanity and human community have continually adapted to changing circumstances. Such a viewpoint allows hermeneutics, philosophy, and theology to approach critically humanity in terms of its empirical diversity and value.

²⁶³ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 325.

²⁶⁴ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 325.

Furthermore, Lonergan believed theology to be dynamic and creative, as the mediation between a cultural matrix and the role of religion in that matrix, and so it could never be a universal, univocal pronouncement for all of time. Not surprisingly, this is also how he viewed the ultimate purpose of Vatican II.²⁶⁵ Indeed a standout theme of his post-conciliar writing focused on why the older, classicist framework of the Catholic theological tradition was inadequate and how the timeless notions of grace and nature from that framework could be retrieved to combine with a historically conscious view of modern culture and values. As Melchin notes,

Unfortunately, Catholic theology had not incorporated the achievements from [the shift to historical consciousness] into its work, and this left it disconnected from the challenges of the modern world, incapable of fulfilling its mission as articulated in the Vatican II Pastoral Constitution.²⁶⁶

The point to this section on the difference between a historically conscious worldview and a classicist one is not the tension that comes about when these approaches conflict, but that when juxtaposed with Lonergan's four realms of meaning for human living, one can appreciate the kind of thinking and meaning generated by each approach to history. Lonergan wrote that the human being is confronted with three basic philosophical questions: what am I doing when I am

²⁶⁵ Bernard Lonergan, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980*, Robert Croken and Robert Doran (eds.), (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004) 241.

²⁶⁶ Kenneth Melchin, "The Challenge of Historical Consciousness: Healing Divisions in the Church," *The Lonergan Review*, 7:1(2016) 88. Also see, Bernard Lonergan, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980*, 138, and Robert Doran's interpretation of Lonergan's differentiation of classicist dogmatism and historical mindedness in Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 489-491.

knowing? why is doing that knowing? and, what do I know when I do it?²⁶⁷ The difference between a classicist mindset and one that appeals to historical consciousness, particularly one that is able to differentiate meaning at the levels of theory and interiority, is precisely how each respond to these questions.

A classicist mindset answers these questions from the perspective of the outer realms of common sense thinking and theory, with the limitation that common sense cannot accurately understand its own limitations and deformations, notably those limitations and deformations that arise because of biases, the most pernicious of which is the general bias of common sense. Conversely, one who is historically conscious is situated to shift into the stage of meaning found in subjective interiority.

It is an existential shift from a classicist outlook with externally and traditionally controlled sets of meaning where one is content to rest in undifferentiated consciousness, to the process of existentially uncontrolled meaning found through the unrestricted act of questioning toward differentiated consciousness that comes about through the process of self-appropriation and interiority within the third realm of meaning. To do that one must make the shift from description (from within the common sense realm) to explanation (within the realm of theory) in order to gain a more accurate understanding of the meaning of the data that we seek.

²⁶⁷ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 316.

Yet theories and heuristic structures of concepts aptly explain the socio-historical culture in which they are devised:

To get a properly moving viewpoint and a properly widened understanding from a viewpoint that allows you to shift from one theory-frame to another you need the second shift to interiority where your understanding and appropriation of the operations of consciousness discovers that the controls of meaning are not out there--they are intrinsic to the operations themselves—this is the third stage or realm of meaning.”²⁶⁸

It is here we gain a full understanding of tools for self-critical assessment and how biases operate within ourselves and within each realm of meaning; it also provides a much more nuanced understanding of how bias in relation to controlled meaning operates within history.

Thus, classicism is a worldview that appeals primarily to the first and second realms of meaning (common sense and theory respectively), whereas historical consciousness takes the turn to interiority in an attempt to *discover* meaning. As I attempted to illustrate with my three Catholic feminist interlocutors, the feminist turn to interiority insists on the discovery of meaning in terms of one's body, being, and intersubjectivity, a move that reflects a clear shift away from a classicist perspective. It looks to the discovery of meaning from empirical data based on existential experience and appeals to and applies theory and methodologies to study such data from those of the second realm of meaning (theory). Yet, without making a full turn to interiority from within the third realm of meaning (interiority), meaning is still influenced and governed by theoretical

²⁶⁸ Kenneth Melchin, in email communication with the author, April 11, 2017.

controls. But as Lonergan argues, without the scientist making the full turn to interiority in the third realm of meaning, the appropriation of the meaning of data remains undifferentiated regarding the first and second realms, as do the biases that influence those meanings, notably the general bias of common sense generated from within the first realm.

Unlike classicist thought, the shift to a historically-minded worldview calls for an inductive, as opposed to a deductive, approach to human agency. It does so by placing emphasis on human experience and human consciousness (turn to interiority) precisely because the inquirer *is* the subject. It is a shift from a classicist ideal order to what *de facto* is, and from ideal meanings to the actual meanings that people intend, comprising a contemporary ontology that encompasses the constant of human nature and the variability of human historicity. This shift in outlook is key to Lonergan's approach to what makes us human: not only what we all share in terms of human inquiry and operations of consciousness, but also what is common to the spirit of the human species—what constitutes human nature regardless of a person's physical characteristics (including gender and race), patterns of individual experience, or historical situatedness.

Based on Lonergan's understanding of the human subject, Robert Doran explains that our ability to see beyond our individual differences "is possible only because there is a *humanum*."²⁶⁹ An ability which we all share, it can move us toward a clear vision of cross-cultural constituents. Doran argues for an

²⁶⁹ Robert M. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 38.

intercultural alternative to the oppressions that continue throughout the world—not a uni-culture where all cultures meld into one, but one where all diversities (for example languages, races, religious traditions, heritage, and sexualities) mutually encourage and reinforce their respective value and riches. In this context, the question becomes, “What can that culture teach us in this one?”

This is not to say that this is the highest value of ethical living for Doran, as he places his concept of a world-cultural humanity within the context of the scale of values. Rather, the conscious appropriation of the common *humanum* points us to the apex of the scale. Therefore, seeking out and embracing diversity, and discovering its respective meanings enabled by the process of interiority, will mark that path, not adherence and deference to exclusivity based primarily on a classicist outlook or horizons that do not see beyond the first realm of common sense meaning.

On the individual level, when one is deprived of acting on this ability to gain insights, due to “cultural conditioning and determinism is to be deprived of a constituent of the *humanum*,”²⁷⁰ it is to be denied the experience and recognition of an intrinsic part of our inner being.²⁷¹ I believe Lonergan would argue that such overriding determinism, characteristic of a classicist approach to human agency, limits or prevents one from existentially moving toward discovering self-meaning

²⁷⁰ Robert M. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 40.

²⁷¹ See Susan Gray, “A New Theology of Women? Some General Observations and Deductions on Lonergan’s Approach to Human Agency in Light of the Catholic Teaching of Womanhood,” *The Lonergan Review*, 7:1(2016):129-156. In this article I argue this particular point, that the human search for self-understanding and wholeness of being cannot be carried out authentically when one is restricted by cultural conditioning and prescriptive notions of what constitutes right living.

found within the realm of interiority because one's focus is directed mainly within the level of common sense, everyday concerns. Indeed, a classicist approach to human agency appeals more to the limits of meaning found within the first realm of meaning, that of common sense.

Therefore, Lonergan's notion of *humanum* encompasses three key characteristics. It is a composite dimension of human consciousness common to all people that fuels the human drive to ask pure questions. Second, it is the constitutive basis for the human search for meaning and value through the process of insight found in the movement of life. And third, the successful trajectory in this search involves cooperation with God in God's shaping of the interior and exterior aspects of our lives.²⁷²

Therefore, precisely through the gift of God's grace, which is already working in us as an element of the common *humanum*, we are able to pursue true questions of morality and justice even within organizations and set value systems that are borne out of a classicist tradition that views the values of the good, true, and right in human living as fixed and normative. Quite simply, if the notion of what constitutes human nature and the values for human living are fixed and normative at the level of culture on the scale of values, there is little need to question personal values, one level up.

Lonergan, on the other hand, asserts that the problem of contextual dialectic is not just the bias that causes injustice (group bias), but a deeper more pervasive

²⁷² Robert M. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 358.

bias: the general bias of common sense. His solution supports the structure and validity of the scale of values. Thus, in terms of a heuristic structure that would support the analysis of both biases, a possible solution would correct and sublate the limitations posed by a group-bias analysis in order to realize and work out the solution that would promote itself as a higher viewpoint.

4.2.1. The Limits of a Group-Bias Analysis I: The Work of Robert Doran - Self-Transcendence Within the Heuristic of Lonergan's Scale of Values

From the outset in this section, I would like to point out that by his own admission Robert Doran has paid little attention to critical theory in general.²⁷³ Nonetheless with his work on psychic conversion,²⁷⁴ a fourth conversion beyond Lonergan's three (intellectual, moral, and religious), he analyzes the interplay between the effects of the group and general biases in relation to the scale of values, which is very valuable for my discussion in this chapter. In effect, his work regarding bias and human values lays the foundation required in order to discuss the other two theologians who critique the limits of critical theory later in this chapter.

A contextual theologian who critically analyzes an identified group bias within a context of oppression (e.g., patriarchy or racism) attempts to do the following: use accumulated insights from the first stage of meaning (common

²⁷³ Robert Doran, "Question re Psychic Conversion - Reply to Susan Gray," *Email*, October 3, 2016.

²⁷⁴ Beyond the three conversions that Lonergan specifies (intellectual, moral, religious), Doran has argued for a fourth, that of psychic conversion which he defines as "an instrument for the differentiation and appropriation of cross-cultural modes of psychic symbolization" as a compliment to the disengagement of universally human patterns of questioning within Lonergan's intentionality analysis. He argues beyond the three types of intentionality played out in Lonergan's work (cognitive, moral and religious), that there is the necessity of appropriating the sensitive psyche. See Robert Doran, *Psychic Conversion and Theological Foundations*, 8-9 and chapter 3.

sense) and employ scientific methodology derived from the second stage of meaning (theory controlled by a logic). They also employ elements from having taken the turn to the subject on the third stage of meaning (interiority), but Lonergan would argue that the critical theorist's turn to interiority is not yet complete for the following reasons.

The theologian who approaches critical dialectics of oppression objectifies the context and its agents (the oppressor and the oppressed), who are assessed from the perspective of historical consciousness, but does not necessarily objectify them in the process. To make the full turn to interiority, as part of Lonergan's Generalized Empirical Method (GEM), the interiority, subjectivity, and the structures, norms and potentialities of one's own personal cognitive operations must be appropriated. Doran explains that this process is a profoundly existential one that encompasses an enlarging of one's consciousness, and an awareness of that expansion, into a realm "that moves theory into a higher context where it becomes an aid to the concrete articulate self-possession of the human person in self-knowledge and self-constitution... [that results] in a differentiation of consciousness."²⁷⁵

This process resembles theory and a heightening of intentional consciousness, but is really a deliberate attending to oneself. And it is wholly subjective: "As this heightened consciousness constitutes the evidence of one's account of knowledge, such an account by the proximity of evidence differs from all

²⁷⁵ Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 43.

other expression.”²⁷⁶ Such self-appropriation provides one precisely with the critical tools to analyze common sense insights and procedures as well as the differentiation of scientific inquiry and various methods.

The importance of the complete move to interiority in the theologian is key and should not be understated as it constitutes a primary element in Lonergan’s notion of self-transcendence. Doran further explains how the full turn to interiority sublates common sense and theoretical kinds of thinking, such as that which operates primarily in classicist thinking, into a more finely-tuned differentiation of consciousness that provides the theologian with the foundation of objectivity against the backdrop of Lonergan’s foundational questions: What am I doing when I am knowing (cognitional)? Why is doing that knowing (epistemological)? and What do I know when I do it (metaphysical)? And when these are asked from a theological perspective, Doran asks: what do I do with my own data of consciousness that I have discovered through the process of self-appropriation from the process of interiority, when then viewed through the Christological lens? He answers this last question with the following:

I implement the integral heuristic structure of proportionate being by reorienting contemporary common sense and by reorienting and integrating contemporary scientific knowledge through the development of positions and the reversal of counterpositions...the position on the subject [the theologian] is no longer limited to the self-affirmation of the knower; the position on being is differentiated from the position on the good, for we can approve of what is not and disapprove of what is; and the position on objectivity includes the accounts of existential self-transcendence, of affective detachment, of universal willingness, or moral, religious and Christian authenticity [with the objective] to specify, initiate, promote and sustain new ranges

²⁷⁶ Bernard Lonergan, Bernard Lonergan, *Early Works on Theological Method 1*, 540

of schemes of recurrence on human cognitional and existential praxis.²⁷⁷

So it is precisely within the third stage of meaning where one's concerns shift from meanings appropriated in the first two stages (common sense and theory ordered by a logic) to

acts of meaning, from products to sources, from objects to operations, and then to a synthesis of operations and objects in a higher viewpoint. What *Insight* conceived as a search for a common ground became a cumulative and progressive effort to articulate a *normative* source of meaning.²⁷⁸

The normative source of meaning cannot be found only within the first two stages of meaning because the discoverable insights of those two stages are only partial. They cannot include those personal subjective insights that one discovers by adverting to oneself fully as a subject on the third stage of meaning. As Lonergan writes, "...the transition from common sense and theory to interiority promotes us from consciousness of self to knowledge of self."²⁷⁹ The theologian, as active subject, has then not only entered the realm of interiority as a self-knower ('the twentieth century turn to the subject'), but has made the advancement at that stage of meaning to the appropriation of the *full order of human praxis* beyond the determination of personal value, since within this process one discovers what is authentic (in terms of the good, the true, and the right) in oneself as subject.

²⁷⁷ Robert Doran, *Psychic Conversion and Theological Foundations* 58.

²⁷⁸ Robert Doran, "Introductory Lecture Notes on Lonergan's *Insight*" 3. Emphasis mine.

²⁷⁹ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 259.

In other words, is one able to authenticate the values of objective human living if one has not self-appropriated one's own authenticity in terms of the values of subjective living? Doran refers to this as the political responsibility of methodical theology where the theologian

affirms with explanatory precision the normative exigencies of their own subjectivity. Such subjects bear collaborative responsibility for cognitive and existential praxis that will promote the human good, especially at a juncture in history when the human good depends upon the transcultural discovery of the normative order of inquiry.²⁸⁰

In effect, subjective self-transcendence (or liberation) not only allows the subject to achieve personal authenticity, but also effectuates a re-viewing (or re-assessment) of those meanings and values already appropriated from the first two stages meaning. Lonergan explains this process more acutely in his discussion of how each of us formulates our worldview:

Beyond sensitivity [sensitive appetites] man asks questions, and his questioning is unrestricted. First there are questions for intelligence. We ask what and why and how and what for. Our answers unify and relate, classify and construct, serialize and generalize. From the narrow strip of space-time accessible to immediate experience, we move towards the construction of a world-view and toward the exploration of what we ourselves could be...questions for intelligence follow questions for reflection...whether or not this is really so...now self-transcendence takes on new meaning. Not only does it go beyond the subject but also it seeks what is independent of the subject ... [yet] such self-transcendence is only cognitive. It is in the order not of doing but only of knowing. But on the final level of questions for deliberation, self-transcendence becomes moral...that moral self-transcendence is the possibility of benevolence and beneficence, of honest collaboration and of true love.²⁸¹

²⁸⁰ Robert Doran, *Psychic Conversion and Theological Foundations* 59.

²⁸¹ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 104.

Two words are key in this passage: moral and love. Doran explains that as we traverse this process, affective self-transcendence leads us to the fourth stage of meaning, that of religiously transcendent meaning, which is reached when we fall in love, particularly when we fall in love with God as *the* other-worldly love. This state is different from love of a finite worldly object or person because it transcends us into the dynamic state of sanctifying grace as a way of life. Within the fourth stage of meaning, selfishness and self-objectification do not exist.²⁸² Therefore, affective intentionality and intersubjective living within that state become solely focused on God's values: faith, hope, and—most especially—charity.

When this process occurs through full self-transcendence, values for human living are seen through a supernatural lens; where one would have previously identified and judged biases and dialectic through a lens of incomplete insights and judgments derived from the first two stages of meaning, one now judges and more importantly responds to them with a love whose foundation is grace. To take this one step further, without self-transcendence in this regard, one is truly unable to love one's enemy. Doran's words in this regard are significant as the culmination of this process is nothing other than what Lonergan refers to as a religious conversion:

By reason of the movement from above downward [operative grace] in consciousness, intellectual conversion is grounded in religious and moral conversion. But religious and moral conversion now sublate intellectual conversion, and are thus informed by a new,

²⁸² Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 51 and Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 289.

more precise, and more self-possessed orientation, not of what is 'out there,' but what is good and to the mystery that transcends the concrete universe of proportionate being and the limitations placed upon this universe by the fact that its immanent intelligibility of emergent probably is an unfolding in the space-time continuum. That orientation is also a transformation of the common sense through its information by a new stance toward the universe of being and a new notion of objectivity.²⁸³

I believe what Doran intends in this passage is that for the one who traverses the process of self-transcendence beyond the third stage of meaning (interiority) into the fourth (religious transcendence), one is not only given the gift of operative grace, "the movement from above downward," but with this gift also comes the critical ability to differentiate types of consciousness including common sense thinking, and analyze them with a new, previously unpossessed objectivity that focuses on the good of human of living. Thus, the subjectivity of the self leads to objectivity.

Moreover, if one is able to differentiate different kinds of conscious thinking (i.e., common sense from theoretical from interiority), one is also able to identify and analyze the different types of biases that operate in those realms of consciousness. There is also one very important point Doran makes near the end of this quotation, one that is easily overlooked: Such a change in stance also effectuates a re-visioning of the data of common sense. And I believe this is precisely what Lonergan means when he says the solution to the general bias works not against it, but with it.

²⁸³ Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 79.

For the critical theorist who has entered into the third stage of meaning (interiority), but not traversed the process of self-transcendence explained here, identifying the general bias of common sense is not possible. Indeed, the group bias would remain the sole basis for dialectical analysis. Doran explains that

the person, then, as a self-transcendent originator of values in self and the world does not exist, and is in fact an impossibility, without the gift of God's grace. Religious values, then, are the condition of the possibility of personal integrity.²⁸⁴

And without authenticity of integrity at the level of the personal on the scale of values, authenticity at the level of the culture and below and the social dialectic that causes decline cannot be comprehensively, coherently, and correctly analyzed.

For my purposes here, if I apply Doran's comments on this point specifically, I see a key limit to contextual theology which, to use Lonergan's terminology remains at the level of a group-bias analysis: While the contextual theologian has made the turn to *the subject* quite directly, without the full turn to interiority on the third stage of meaning and the process of self-transcendence to personal authenticity, he simply cannot apply the methodological tools needed to identify and further analyze any operative biases beyond the group bias as he does not yet possess them.

Frederick Lawrence effectively places this in context for us when he argues that the "Christian community in its cognitive function is making the tortuous

²⁸⁴ Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectic of History*, 99.

passage from the second into the third stage of meaning.”²⁸⁵ But he notes also that a key tension that arises in this move from self-sacrifice to self-knowledge tends to overshadow, if not sidestep, the message of genuine self-transcendence of the Christian gospel.

Thus, without this full move into interiority, the contextual critic misdiagnoses the problem of oppression as driven only by the group bias because he has not yet appropriated the tools that come about from the full turn to interiority, which would then allow him to loosen the controls of meaning found at the second stage of theory. Doran further explains that primordial intersubjectivity and dialectical tension mark any community, but the presence of the group bias causes a sharpening of dialectic that, when coupled with the general bias, becomes *practical*.²⁸⁶

For example, politics eventually becomes incapable of keeping healthy dialectical tension above practicality and expediency because it becomes more concerned with promoting one force over another. This is particularly evident in a two-party political system, as in the United States and, for all intents and purposes, as in Canada. Healthy tension that publicly addresses the values of the cultural notions of beauty, the intelligible, the true, and the good become displaced by distorted practicality incapable of genuine self-critique and are relegated to the private realm of personal living. In effect, there exists no common ground nor a

²⁸⁵ See Frederick Lawrence, *The Fragility of Consciousness: Faith, Reason, and the Human Good* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017) 349.

²⁸⁶ Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectic of History*, 102-104.

public mechanism by which to critique such values because the scale of values has become radically skewed toward immediate personal gratification and economic greed. This is also a point that will be further discussed in the following section that focuses on the work of Patrick Byrne.

Therefore, Doran characterizes the inter-operation of the group and general biases as two separate sets of ideas that, although intricately linked, refuse needed insights for the flourishing of human practical and existential agency, causing societal decline. The group bias that

prevent those ideas that remotely or proximately effect an equitable distribution of material goods to all groups in a social system, and [those] that demand the solution of more theoretic issues, or that presuppose the adoption of a long-range point of view that is equivalent with the self-transcendent capacities of human intentionality²⁸⁷

Without the discovery of such a higher viewpoint, the higher values on the scale of values cannot positively condition the lower values. Thus we can see how the group and general biases on the scale prevent the flourishing of existential agency that would condition the freedom of the normative order of inquiry, allowing for the emergence of insights that come about on the third stage of meaning, the process of interiority. Within the long cycle of decline, the conditions for the antecedent willingness to submit to the process of interiority are also prevented. And without full interiority, agency is also restricted from discovering its own explanatory account of the process of interiority itself.

²⁸⁷ Robert Doran, *Psychic Conversion and Theological Foundations*, 126.

If we place an oppressive context within Lonergan's scale of values above, we can effectively see how group bias distorts the functioning of a good of order at the two lowest levels. This was certainly the case in Nazi Germany and Apartheid South Africa where institutionalized oppression of particular groups not only affected but also *directed* the vital and social values at the bottom to the apex of the scale. The result was eventual decline of the scale itself. In both these cases, bias was institutionalized legislatively and imposed socially, affecting every facet of life of the oppressor and the oppressed. Yet while structures, systems, and societal organization are built up by the oppressing force to support the bias of their interests, we must remember that dismantling such ensuing structures does not go to the heart of the problem. Dismantling such structures is necessary, but does not constitute a comprehensive, long-term solution. Doran reminds us that it is the interrelationships of such societies that should be the focus of critical analysis:

The good of order is shattered by bias, but the shattering is rooted in the subjects who generate the social order. And because of the vicious circle of development that makes the effectiveness of bias almost inevitable, it is not sufficient to transpose the problem of the distorted dialectic of community from the realms of the political, economic and technological infrastructure to the cultural superstructure and the personal authenticity that renders cultural integrity possible. For personal authenticity itself is not self-grounding.²⁸⁸

In other words, genuine and authentic values of human living cannot then develop and thrive just because oppressive structures are dismantled. This is especially true of those whose group bias took hold in the first place.

²⁸⁸ Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 196.

New obligations can be imposed on all subjects in a society once an oppressive group is removed from power, but this does not guarantee their positive moral agency. Lonergan refers to this as moral impotence, or the gap that exists between the effective freedom one actually possesses (e.g., the constitutional rights guaranteed to all South African citizens post-Apartheid) and the kind of freedom one would have if free from intersubjective biases. In this respect, an oppressed subject may be awarded effective freedom such as legislative rights, and an oppressor may be finally and rightly legally prohibited from acting out of bias, but the internalized biases in both parties still remain.

Lonergan asks, “How is one to be persuaded to genuineness and openness, when one is not yet open to persuasion?”²⁸⁹ Changing the structures and laws of a particular good of order are of only limited value in this regard precisely because they are logical, practical, and immediately effective *but* appear to constitute the long-term positive solution, which reflects the general bias of those who recommend and institute such institutional solutions.

Rather, Doran argues that one must become an “originating value in this dialectical process by fidelity to the normative order of inquiry ... [in order] to elevate one’s practical agency to existential authenticity.”²⁹⁰ It is precisely this process of unrestricted inquiry that leads to the discovery of “a good beyond its powers of criticism,”²⁹¹ away from the finite and practical goods that already exist

²⁸⁹ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 647.

²⁹⁰ Robert Doran, *Psychic Conversion*, 135.

²⁹¹ Robert Doran, *Psychic Conversion*, 136.

in society to the infinite goods that are discovered post-interiority at the fourth stage of meaning: transcendent other-worldly love.

In support of his notion of psychic conversion, Doran argues that for a higher science of human transformation to be discovered, humanity cannot ignore the normative order of inquiry. A key part to that discovery is self-discovery through the telling of one's own narrative: "one's story is a matter of the satisfaction or frustration of one's desire for meaning, truth, reality, and value."²⁹² So, along with the failure to recognize the general bias, there has also been a "neglect of the transcendental aesthetic dimension of our subjectivity" that expresses itself in crime, drug addiction, suicide, mental instability, etc.²⁹³

Doran explains that the process of interiority at the third stage of meaning becomes even more potent and beneficial when one attends to and includes self-narrative as it directly reflects one's sensitive psyche, concerning one's relationship within the dialectic of progress and decline. Indeed, without this wholly subjective self-attention leading to an "ecological balance of the energies of interiority,"²⁹⁴ complete interiority cannot occur.

While time and focus here do not permit me to explore Doran's notion of psychic conversion more deeply, I believe he makes a valid point: wholeness of body, mind, and inner being must be the basis for the process of interiority with its constitutive trajectory toward the other-worldly love of God. For when existential

²⁹² Robert Doran, *Psychic Conversion*, 166.

²⁹³ Robert Doran, *Psychic Conversion*, 140.

²⁹⁴ Robert Doran, *Psychic Conversion*, 144.

self-appropriation is self-cultivated, it “allows the dissolving of the repressive censorship that would prevent the emergence into consciousness of the sensitive data that are requisite if we are to understand ourselves correctly and guide our decisions responsibly.”²⁹⁵ Such sensitive data must include that of pain and joy.

Given this explanation of the subject, my premise then becomes thus: When the subject is the theologian assessing the dialectic of a particular historical context, and in order for the scientist of God to assess the dialectic as it *truly* is, she must see beyond the obvious empirical evidence of the existing group bias at work and include identification and analysis of the general bias as it truly is. This includes recognition of the general bias at work in herself.

As Doran has argued, for the general bias to be discovered, the process of subjective interiority at the third stage of meaning must be traversed. By this account, this would include being attentive to one’s own narrative as it relates to the object of critical assessment in its entirety, as a dialectic affected by both group and general biases. At the very least, this constitutes a reorientation of the subject in order to reveal that which has been “buried by the hypertrophic emphasis on instrumental reason or practical common sense.”²⁹⁶ The theologian, as a critical scientist seeking a holistic solution to the problem of evil, cannot seemingly operate from the belief of objectivity *outside* of the scale of values in an attempt to assess a dialectic within it. Rather the theologian is an organic part of communal

²⁹⁵ Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 550.

²⁹⁶ Robert Doran, *Psychic Conversion and Theological Foundations*, 145.

living and as such is a part of the cycle of decline and by extension, a part of the dialectic.

To summarize Doran's thought on subjectivity and decline: For one to traverse the third stage of meaning means self-attention and self-revelation. It is a wholly subjective process in the order of inquiry and necessary to discover one's place in history and one's affective relationship with the relative authenticity of values in human life as they are realized at this juncture in history. Self-transcendence cannot be effectuated without subjectively experiencing interiority at the third stage of meaning.

Part of that process is the willingness and commitment to subject oneself to subjectivity, otherwise: a. one remains closed to full self-transcendence and the fourth stage of meaning, that of religious transcendence out of sin to a state of charity that is oriented toward us from above, and b. one remains without the tools acquired at the third stage of meaning that allow oneself to differentiate the kinds of data and values that reside at the first two stages of meaning.

What are the ways in which the group bias promotes the general bias? Doran offers us three ways, based on Lonergan.²⁹⁷ First, the solutions proposed by contextual theologians are often justice-based ones that point to structural and legal remedies within society, as we have previously discussed. But Lonergan views this as a surrender of intelligence or intellect to practicality *that perceives itself* as intelligent, empirical, scientific, objective in analysis, and realistic when in

²⁹⁷ Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectic of History*, 410-417.

fact it is practical and thereby serves common sense thinking with its biased preference for tidy, neat solutions that reflect logic, controlled meaning, and limited questioning.

When a contextual analysis, even within theology, calls for a dismantling of an oppressive structure in a given culture, and the enacting of laws in an attempt to prevent a recurrence of the original oppressive structure, it does not probe the problem deeply enough since it has rejected “the normative significance of the detached and disinterested intelligence [that] makes it radically uncritical.”²⁹⁸ In other words, an expedient logical solution that is based on a new law, a new policy, or a new social structure does not take into consideration the *data on man*. It is an appeal to practicality in terms of immediate feasibility:

The helplessness of tolerance to provide coherent solutions to social problems called forth the totalitarian, who takes the narrow and complacent practicality of common sense and elevates it to the role of a complete and exclusive viewpoint.²⁹⁹

In effect, the solution emergent from a group-bias analysis adapts its theory to the practice and practicality that is already in place, rather than search for a more comprehensive solution. As Doran explains, when social theory appeals to observed acts as if they represented a normative evolution of social reality, it is to capitulate to the very aberration that is responsible for the distorted dialectic in the first place.³⁰⁰ The group-bias analysis has not sufficiently probed the root of the

²⁹⁸ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 257.

²⁹⁹ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 256.

³⁰⁰ Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 410.

problem, but reflects the culture of society as it currently exists. Therefore, the general bias of common sense is fed by the group bias, and increases in force and duration despite the short-term solution that has been put in place.

Doran calls for a suspicion of the hermeneutic of suspicion. He does not intend that it should be abandoned in critical theory, but that its exclusive use as a tool applied to the human situation is an invitation to nihilism, resulting in “complete evacuation of constitutive meaning from the processes of individual and social development.”³⁰¹ From this I infer that the hermeneutic of suspicion is not sufficient to locate authentic value certainly within the scale of values. Therefore, one may question how it can then suitably proceed to identify, retrieve, and qualify those values of a tradition and of classicist thought that would inform a world-cultural alternative to what we live in now—those values paramount in Greek thought: the true, the intelligible, the right, and the good. In other words, without suitable criteria for identifying and promoting good values in our present existence, how can they be retrieved?

Second, when a group-bias solution is implemented, what also occurs is what Doran refers to as the misplacement of the dialectical tension of intersubjectivity in the direction of practical solution. Practical solutions then yield practical results and the tension is never resolved at the level of social self-constitution and culture. If praxis is to be authentic as opposed to practical and

³⁰¹ Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 652.

thereby promoting and remaining within the realm of common sense meaning, it should not be based on instrumentalized technique.³⁰²

Effectuated change in structure or policy may serve to promote practices of solidarity and put in measures that would legally protect past victims, but one can argue that it is not full praxis “that objectifies itself toward interpersonal or intersubjective life-worlds” and so the implemented change more resembles mechanical technique.³⁰³ The bias may be prevented from being acted on overtly, but the bias still remains on the interior level of human living.

Finally, justice-based solutions are human solutions using human-designed structures of society. So I ask to what extent are they properly theological? Lonergan offers us the analogy of human creations as those of *below*, while divine creations, those fueled by grace, are those from *above*. Remember that the higher we strive to live on the scale of values, the farther we are living from bias and sin and the fuller we come to experience unimpeded relations with God. Thus, the more deeply that cultural integrity is penetrated by bias and oppression, the more social reality is perceived and understood from the perspective of *below*. Furthermore, “if there is no reciprocal movement ‘from above,’ then biased intelligence is statistically almost inevitable”³⁰⁴ and comes to be constituted as a recurrent emergence. Hope also increasingly diminishes. Authentic intellectual

³⁰² Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 415-416.

³⁰³ Matthew Lamb, *Solidarity with Victims*, fn 4, 89.

³⁰⁴ Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 410.

exigence on the other hand does not accept the limitations of such a perceived reality.

In sum, we can see how the limits of a group-bias analysis serve to feed the ever-present bias of common sense. Countless examples throughout the recent century support this argument: structures that have been created (e.g., the almost ineffectual United Nations whose purpose at the point of its inception was to prevent war and genocide) and structures that have been dismantled (e.g., the South African system of Apartheid whose majority of black citizens still live in dire poverty).

What is required then, is not only a solution that serves to reverse the group bias, but one that more importantly serves to correct the general bias of common sense.

4.2.3. The Limits of a Group-Bias Analysis II: The Work of Matthew Lamb: Toward Transcendent Agency Within the Third Stage of Meaning

On the heels of the Second Vatican Council, Matthew Lamb presented himself in the 1970s as a theologian who spoke of theology as cognitive and existential. By placing his appropriation of Lonergan's thought within the framework of the emerging liberation theologies (unlike most of his peers working within Catholic theology of the late 1970s and early 1980s), Lamb re-visioned liberation and political theologies from their common understanding as *regional theologies*, or those that pertain to the geo-political area from which they emerge (e.g., Latin American liberation theology). Instead he aligned solidarity with victims of oppression, wherever they exist, with the necessity of the self-transcendence of the

theologian. In other words, liberation theology cannot be carried out as effectively without the liberation of the theologian who does it.

Specifically, he means *liberation of the theologian* in the Lonerganian sense of self-appropriation and fidelity to Lonergan's fivefold transcendental precepts (attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, responsibility, and love). He argues that without this transformation, the theologian cannot truly be in solidarity with the victim. This reflects his belief of the necessary link between theory and praxis that constituted for Lamb, at that time, a foundational reorientation of theological work that would be positioned as a methodical praxis with the goal of social transformation.

Lamb's intended meaning of praxis is "action, whether as a personal, social, cultural, political or religious phenomenon...understood as conscious performance or doing in contrast both to production or making and to theory or definition."³⁰⁵ This would necessarily re-orient the tasks and methods of theology to reflect the self-conscious reorientation of the theologian.

It is important to note that this was an emergent trajectory at this point in the development of North American Catholic theology, where theologians were just beginning to wrestle with the nature and objectives of a theology no longer bound solely by Church tradition and doctrine. The very substance of liberation and political theologies, regardless of their geographical origins, insisted on the necessity to mediate the weight of tradition and dogma in the face of changing

³⁰⁵ Matthew Lamb, *Solidarity with Victims: Toward a Theology of Social Transformation* (New York: Crossroad, 1982) 82 and 106 respectively.

social and political exigencies. This is not to say that Lamb diminishes the importance of Church dogma in terms of the truths of faith or God's revelation within, but like Lonergan he is critical of the historical rigidity in its theological interpretation.

In conjunction with Metz, Lamb argues that Church doctrines and dogma are really subversive memories of unfreedom where "the objectivity of the truth of dogmas is conditioned by the transformative response of Christian praxis."³⁰⁶ In *Solidarity with Victims*, Lamb argues that mediation between the past and the present is not enough for the theologian. Rather, greater fidelity to God's divine promises regarding freedom from bias-driven oppression *in the future* requires not just solid theological theory, but a praxis that stands squarely on a foundation of transformational theological method.

While he does not advocate circumventing critical theory in favour of a praxis-only approach to liberation theologies, he does place more weight on the role of praxis for the theologian: "...critical theory cannot provide a completely adequate framework for all sociological analysis...[but] I find it one of the strongest sociological traditions in emphasizing the need for criticizing the many forms of instrumental rationality."³⁰⁷ It is precisely due to his appropriation of Lonergan's thought on theological method that he sees beyond the Enlightenment turn to the subject and the evolving body of critical theories in the late twentieth century, to theological method grounded in transcendent transformation.

³⁰⁶ Matthew Lamb, *Solidarity with Victims*, 110.

³⁰⁷ Matthew Lamb, *Solidarity with Victims*, xiv.

To work toward such a method, Lamb presents his assessment of critical theory writ large, retrieving for us its strengths and its limitations. In this section, I will offer an overview of this assessment and will then outline how Lamb envisions a dialectical orthopraxis for the theologian that goes beyond the limits of critical theory in a theological context toward one that finds the theologian situated firmly within Lonergan's third stage of meaning characterized by reflective, historical, and dialectical consciousness.³⁰⁸

First, Lamb gives a strong nod to the general method of critical theory that developed out of the Frankfurt School throughout the twentieth century, including the critique of history and tradition (stemming from a hermeneutic of suspicion). This is followed by a recovery of the voices and actions of the oppressed to reconstruct their meaning and significance, and finally the reconstruction of this history as a whole. Referencing Metz (whose work on political theologies critiques Rahner's thought), Lamb calls our attention to the hermeneutic of suspicion, whose chief strength is to take us out of the world of theory, to distance us from "the conceptuality so that we might really experience the historical tensions of contemporary questioning,"³⁰⁹ a dialectical tension that no theory can ever solve.

Second, Lamb notes that political theology is supposed to be transcendental in that it should transform those who want to change the plight of the oppressed into people with more Christ-like identities, necessarily embracing humility,

³⁰⁸ Matthew Lamb, "Praxis and Generalized Empirical Method," in Matthew Lamb (ed.), *Creativity and Method: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lonergan* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1981) 67-70.

³⁰⁹ Matthew Lamb, *Solidarity with Victims*, 119.

responsibility, and love for each other. This must include the theologian. Lamb calls on Lonergan's transcendental precepts in this regard in order to lead us toward the realization of the profundity of "conversions of personal, social, cultural, economic, and political conduct or praxis."³¹⁰ Although Lamb views this move as constituting a *recovery* step within theological method, this is not recovery as most feminist theologies have employed the term where the historical voices of the oppressed are retrieved. Nonetheless, as I argue in this overall project, Lonergan's transcendental precepts and his three conversions (intellectual, moral, and religious) that serve as the basis of his empirical method in theology, also serve to enrich dialectical analysis and to change its trajectory and scope. Lamb's emphasis on this point is part of his work to bring Lonergan's thought to contextual theologies not by replacing the pillars of critical theory but by sublating them in order to understand the dialectic at hand as it truly is at a particular place and time in history.

Finally, Lamb argues that a political hermeneutics, in identifying and capturing the concrete history of human suffering, should be prepared "to challenge official policies when those [contradict] the demands of fidelity to the ongoing *traditio* or handing on of the faith."³¹¹ Thus he is not content to theorize about theological praxis stemming from a cognitive metaphysics; rather, he argues

³¹⁰ Matthew Lamb, *Solidarity with Victims*, 120.

³¹¹ Matthew Lamb, *Solidarity with Victims*, 121.

for a “theoretical articulation of the cognitive praxis or performance underlying both the transitions from consciousness to knowledge and from knowledge to action.”³¹²

Citing Lonergan’s retrieval of Aquinas, Lamb points to the imperative act of questioning as heuristic performance, questioning that should lead to the challenge and analysis of tradition and faith doctrine in the face of changing human sociological circumstances, and the eschewing of deterministic necessity and indisputable reductivism, which he argues leads to human alienation.

While Lamb does not critique critical theory so much as augment it with key aspects of Lonergan’s transcendental method, he explains its chief limitations. Primarily, he notes that traditional critical theory begins its analysis of oppressive contexts from the assumption that it can do so with the capacity of reason and objective analysis of the empirical data as it presents itself in the context. To do so implies that it is “committed to the imperative value of truth...[but] truth as a correspondence between reason and reality is not yet attained”³¹³ and cannot be attained, Lamb and Lonergan argue, by only looking empirically at the data to be studied. This is so because “knowing is not taking a good look but verifying insights into sensible and imaginative data,” which is done by being attentive to the actual related and recurrent operations of consciousness or what we do when we know,³¹⁴ as well as consciously being open to gaining those insights through the unrestricted desire to ask questions. Lamb further explains that this process takes

³¹² Matthew Lamb, “Praxis and Generalized Empirical Method,” 59.

³¹³ Matthew Lamb, *Solidarity with Victims*, 38.

³¹⁴ Matthew Lamb, “Praxis and Generalized Empirical Method,” 60.

one beyond the realm of logic into one of method where the intentionality of the theologian then becomes both factual and normative, appealing to *is* and *ought* respectively.

As opposed to historical-critical methods that focus on empirical research, exegetical interpretation, and historical reconstruction, Lamb describes the overall purpose of social-critical methods of theological inspection as having a dialectical focus that takes seriously the discovery of values and disvalues, including the identification of genuine historical progress from decline: "Dialectics, therefore, have to thematize horizons and breakdowns in terms of ongoing heuristics of histories and societies," particularly in terms of intellectual, moral, and religious values.³¹⁵ Yet this arrived-at understanding is incomplete within historical-critical methods of dialectical analysis as they cannot qualify value judgments but only approximate them.

If this process of critical theory is applied and then augmented by what Lonergan refers to as *method-as-praxis*, those values operative in the dialectic at hand can be appropriated by attending not only to the data of sense *but also* to the data of consciousness. Lamb explains:

People respond to value in actions embodying love or hate even though they cannot explain fully to what they are responding. The knowledge flows from the loving or hating actions; and it flows in terms of judgments of value or disvalue wherein they judge concrete situations in the light of the values they love, and the disvalues they hate. From such judgments they engage in what Ricoeur calls a hermeneutics of recovery (regarding values) and a hermeneutics of suspicion (regarding disvalues) on the level of understanding. Finally, from such decisions, judgments, and hermeneutics, they

³¹⁵ Matthew Lamb, *Solidarity with Victims*, 137.

engage in an empirically transformative action which changes both the data of sense and the data of consciousness, which in turn changes both human hearts and human social and cultural institutions.³¹⁶

Within this approach, decisions and actions precede and then ground a knowledge of values. Such a process, at least with the theologian, does not allow for a blind faith of any kind in one's work, since it is based on the invaluable process of unrestricted questioning that drives the valuation of judgments. If the theological scientist intent on authentically understanding an oppressive context carries out Lonergan's transcendental precepts (attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, responsibility, and love), looks to both empirical (classical, statistical, and genetic) and dialectical methods of analysis, she can identify where the empirical results provide the data for the dialectical discernment of the values and disvalues exhibited by the emergent data, particularly as the context in question is assessed against the backdrop of Lonergan's scale of values.

As Lamb explains, the degree to which the revealed values serve to promote authentic self-transcendence also reveals the level of progress or decline in terms of human liberation of a given context and the extent of the effects of bias. Such a method must begin from a stand not taken on the doctrinal difference between nature and personhood. Rather it must the theologian must realize that method begins from a subjective stance coloured by untransformed value orientations that can be objective only through the ongoing procedures and results

³¹⁶ Matthew Lamb, *Solidarity with Victims*, 129.

of empirical and dialectical method that incorporates transcendental questioning toward the divine.

Lamb writes that the primary “methodological challenge facing contemporary critical theory is that the conceptual categories of all previous cognitive positions and counterpositions are fundamentally inadequate to elucidate the actual performance of critical theory today.”³¹⁷ By this, I believe he means that critical theory writ large is not able to take a stand on the performative outcome of its methodology. In other words, in its attempt to assess and offer solutions to countering human oppression, it cannot actually see to the implementation of such solutions and therefore has no methodical mechanism or step to verify the validity or viability of such solutions, which remain merely recommended, approximate, and incomplete solutions based on empirical data and reasoned logic.

For example, Ada Mariá Isasi-Días argues that within Latina theology (which shares much of its theory and methods with many other contextual theologies)

for there to be a genuine community of interests and purposes between the oppressed and the oppressor, there must be radical action that make oppression impossible. Thus, for solidarity to be a praxis of mutuality it has to struggle to be politically effective; it has to have as its objective *radical structural change*.³¹⁸

³¹⁷ Matthew Lamb, “The Challenge of Critical Theory,” 205.

³¹⁸ Ada Mariá Isasi-Días, “Defining Our Proyecto Histórico,” in Charles Curran, Margaret Farley, and Richard McCormick (eds.), *Feminist Ethics and the Catholic Moral Tradition*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1996) 128. Emphasis mine.

Such a benchmark for contextual theologies recognizes, identifies, and critically reflects on oppression, but does not address *how* the deconstruction or elimination of such oppressive forces addresses the bias that fueled their emergence. Furthermore, this assumes that structural change will be a permanent solution. One can then ask of the limits of such a theological methodology. On the other hand, Lonergan points to what is normative and universal in both oppressors and the oppressed: operations of consciousness and the potential for interior transcendent change.

Lamb explains this limitation succinctly. He describes critical theory as disclosive in terms of its methodological steps, as in revealing the dialectically opposing horizons of meaning and value in any given context: dualisms such as wealthy/poor, white/black, or good/evil, man/woman, etc. And such methods as empirical research, phenomenological hermeneutics, and historical-critical analysis are necessary and valuable “in disclosing the continuous contexts within which theology relates religious traditions to manifold personal, social and cultural situations of the past and present.”³¹⁹ But ultimately, he argues, they are inadequate if, in their appeal to human experience, they minimize the transformative effect of religious and doctrinal symbols on that experience. In other words, a contextual theology that calls for a justice solution based on the dismantling of structures of oppression, and does not emphasize the interior transformation of those who perpetrate and are effected by oppressive forces will

³¹⁹ Matthew Lamb, *Solidarity with Victims*, 104.

not effectuate a long-term or permanent solution. I would add that such methods are ultimately non-theological since they rely on human agency alone. The solution cannot be a *once and for all fix-it* that seems to be at the heart of justice-based solutions within many contextual theologies.

Lamb is, of course, referencing Lonergan's intentionality analysis that emphasizes the potential of a radical solution to biased oppression by focusing specifically on the interior transformation of subject and object, not the material structures of oppression. Lamb further remarks, "truth in this framework is primarily a transforming correspondence between subject and object and only if transformation occurs (in either subject or object or both) is there a disclosure of truth."³²⁰

On this point, Lonergan was critical of Marx's analysis of class conflict and forces of production in society, referring to Marx's intersubjective basis as "artificial"³²¹ in that he focused his dialectical analysis of society on its "nontechnical materialist process,"³²² or economic forces and structures, and not on the interiority of those who carry it out or are affected by them. In precisely this sense, Marx viewed the dialectic of bias as the result of the structure of market forces and production. Lonergan disagreed:

Marx looked forward to a classless society and to the withering of the state. But as long as there will be practical intelligence, there will be technology and capital, economy and polity...[T]here will be a

³²⁰ Matthew Lamb, *Solidarity with Victims*, 128.

³²¹ Bernard Lonergan, "The Role of a Catholic University in the Modern World," in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: Collection*, Frederick Crowe and Robert Doran (Eds), (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988) 110.

³²² Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 242.

division of labor and a differentiation of functions. There will be the adaptation of human intersubjectivity to that division and differentiation. Practical intelligence necessitates classes and states, and no dialectic can promise their permanent disappearance.³²³

In other words, as historically influential as Marx has been regarding political, economic, and social theory, his analysis of oppression included the flawed assumption that once the capitalist structures of Western society were dismantled into a classless state, humanity would be effectively free from oppression. I would add that Marx's focus on oppressive socioeconomic structures failed to include the notion of human development as not merely technical and industrial development but also human development as evolutionary change that occurs within human consciousness over time, that kind of evolutionary shift of human consciousness that has occurred at certain axial points in history.³²⁴

This is a key point that that I wish to emphasize based on two words in particular that stand out in Lonergan's quotation above: "practical intelligence." By this he means the thinking, doing, and producing that humanity carries out within the first stage of meaning, that of common sense. As Lonergan notes, common

³²³ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 262-263.

³²⁴ A variety of scholars who study Lonergan make reference to the type of axial shift in human intellectual development, such as that written about by Karl Jaspers, including Frederick Crowe, Robert Doran and Carla Mae Streeter. See: Frederick Crowe, *Lonergan and the Level of Our Time* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010) 5-8, 302-303; Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 291-292, 531-534, 545-546, 658-663; and Carla Mae Streeter, *Foundations in Spirituality: The Human and the Holy, A Systematic Approach* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013) 3-6, 26, 30. To my knowledge, Lonergan only referred to this notion twice in his writing. See Bernard Lonergan, *Collection*, 237, and Bernard Lonergan, *Second Collection*, 226-227. Nevertheless, Doran argues that the notion of axial shifts in human thinking underpins Lonergan's entire notions of interiorly differentiated consciousness, the third stage of meaning and his phenomenology of the data of cognitional process as expounded in the first part of *Insight*. See Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 533-536.

sense thinking is necessary for human living; however, it is neither scientific, nor objective, nor articulate, but incomplete, supporting everyday concerns of a materialistic nature, such as market economies.³²⁵ Lonergan's point is simply that Marx's materialist notion of society and history, and his belief that a classless society would bring about human freedom are based on practical intelligence derived from common sense thinking on the first stage of meaning, which does not include in its horizon of understanding the judgment of values that come about on the third stage of meaning, that of interiority.

As discussed in the previous chapter, common sense thinking is inadequate in its analytical abilities as it is incapable of scientific analysis and appropriating interiority in the subject and object, and therefore begets the general bias—precisely why Marx's analysis of the solution to human freedom was flawed. In effect, Marx advocated the dismantling of a structure (albeit a massive, intricate one) that included, as Melchin writes, an emphasis on the dependence of social and economic routines on the conditions for their exercise:

Marx recognized that the conditions surrounding the acts of production of any age are the result of a dialectical interplay between the acts of production of the previous age and the negations in social life which the effects of such acts generate. While Marx urged men and women to assume responsibility for history, his explanation of the determinants of this history placed no emphasis upon the degree to which *subjective agency* authors these determinants.³²⁶

³²⁵ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 198-199.

³²⁶ Kenneth Melchin, *History. Ethics and Emergent Probability*, 224. Emphasis mine.

As twentieth century history proved, Marxist socialism led to totalitarianism primarily because the problem of human oppression was misdiagnosed by Marx himself as a structural, materialist problem, not a human one.

And this is the chief point that Lamb makes in his critique of traditional critical theory. Because it operates primarily on the level of common sense thinking but adopts a *scientific method of inquiry*, three repercussions ensue. First, the kind of critical theory that has evolved over the last century, so central to social inquiry, is “unaware of its own presuppositions and thereby [tends] to erect itself as *the* criterion of all criticism.”³²⁷ As such, much of critical theory is uncritical of itself and its methodologies primarily because it mistakenly sees itself as scientifically objective in its operations. Yet, common sense thinking, even in its application of scientific methods is guilty of the general bias, and so does not seek value-based judgments. Rather, it seeks the facts as they can be observed and sensed, what Lonergan describes as the “already-out-there-now-real.”³²⁸

Lamb rightly notes that Marx’s entire economic project “was a critical attempt to materialize in real social relations the identity between reason and reality.”³²⁹ However, human values are neither material, nor structural, nor quantifiable in a scientific or statistical sense, which accounts for the evolution of social and cultural forms of repressive identity systems, legitimated by empirical

³²⁷ Matthew Lamb, *Solidarity with Victims*, 30.

³²⁸ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 276-277. This concept is discussed at length in the next chapter.

³²⁹ Matthew Lamb, *Solidarity with Victims*, 34.

critical methods “increasingly constituted by value-free observation and quantification as the only valid form of rationality.”³³⁰

Another repercussion explained by Lamb is one that can be illustrated with Habermas’ critical theory, which is based on the reconstruction of historical materialism in terms of communication theory and quasi-transcendental interests.³³¹ Of note, there is no specifically defined target group within his dialectical analysis, which is identified as an agent *for* social transformation. Therefore, the identity of victims and oppressors is not explored, but rather referred to in broad descriptions under the auspices of the structures of capitalism (in the case of economic oppression and capitalist forces). I believe this may explain how some strands of critical theory, and indeed even some political and contextual theologies, have developed to focus more on the structures of a given context as oppressive above those who support and contribute to the oppressive actions of them as in need of transcendent reorientation. I would add, however, that more recent contextual theologies focus on such aspects as victim identity, responsibility, and agency such as the theologies of M. Shawn Copeland, Patrick Cheng, and Lisa Isherwood, and can conceivably be considered as developments within the overall field of theology in this regard.

My sense is that perhaps what the advent of critical theory was to the Enlightenment’s turn to the subject, contextual theologies are now evolving into

³³⁰ Matthew Lamb, *Solidarity with Victims*, 35. Lamb is making reference in this quote to Alvin Gouldner and Theodor Adorno.

³³¹ Matthew Lamb, *Solidarity with Victims*, 44-45.

praxes at the cusp of Lonergan's third stage of meaning, and are beginning to take into account the transcendent process of interiority. As I will elucidate in the next chapter, Copeland's work clearly shows this turn. Nevertheless, Lamb's point is a cogent one: many praxis-oriented theologies seem to place more weight on the importance of dismantling structural oppression as the chief means to overcoming domination and exploitation than on the transcendental agency of those who perpetrate and are affected by it.

Finally, Lamb effectively argues that Lonergan's goal in dialectical discernment is twofold: to uncover the sin of oppression and to determine *how* the relative values or disvalues are operating within a particular context.

Lonergan is interested neither in historical reconstructions...nor in providing fresh data on past historical events. Rather his dialectics is based upon the intellectual appropriation of the cognitive dimensions of orthopraxis, aiming to discern how the values and disvalues such an appropriation uncovers are present.³³²

Even conflicts in the world of theory express differentiations of consciousness, mixtures of thought that reflect different stages in meaning. As opposed to empirically-based historical-critical methodologies that aim at uncovering empirical data (e.g., data that reveal the presence and effects of an oppressive context), a dialectical analysis seeks to uncover the values and disvalues that drive the opposed positions within the context. Thus it seeks not only to promote values that support victim agency, for example, but those values that will support a healthy scale of values from the bottom up. In doing so, it must analyze the values that

³³² Matthew Lamb, *Solidarity with Victims*, 137.

drive all parties to the conflict in order to reveal the truth of differentiations in developments and aberrations on that scale.

4.2.4. The Limits of a Group-Bias Analysis III: The Work of Patrick Byrne - From Bipolar to Tripolar Dialectics

Patrick Byrne has studied and applied Lonergan's theological and philosophical thought for most of his professional academic career. Indeed, Byrne's mode of ethical discernment is firmly rooted in Lonergan's method of theology:

Behind that idea of a method of ethics stands the ideal of ethical authenticity—that is, morally converted thinking, valuing, deciding, and action, which takes place within a horizon of feelings converted and faithful to the immanent norms of the unrestricted notion of value, restricted being-in-love, and the normative scale of value preference.³³³

Yet if one spans the published works of Lonergan scholars since his death in 1984, the subject of ethics is not front and centre; indeed, most theologians and philosophers familiar with his thought appeal to his theories of subjectivity and human knowing. Thus, Byrne's work in this area is particularly germane and offers ethicists and theologians avenues for further exploration on the "many difficult questions which [Lonergan] did not himself answer explicitly, or that he addressed elliptically or in confusing ways."³³⁴

With this section then, I wish to appeal to Byrne's approach to ethical discernment and the value of valuing, highlighting his work concerning the notion of *ressentiment* (as a manifestation of scotosis) and its deleterious effects on the

³³³ Patrick Byrne, *The Ethics of Discernment*, 296.

³³⁴ Patrick Byrne, *The Ethics of Discernment*, 3.

process of human valuation.³³⁵ Based on Byrne's work in this regard and my introduction to *ressentiment* in the previous chapter, I hope to illustrate how this type of biased thinking distorts Lonergan's scale of values for human living. Further, I will address how an analysis of *ressentiment* takes one from a bipolar dialectical examination of positions and counterpositions (to which most liberation theologians appeal) to one that is tripolar in its approach, including the redeeming force of grace required to bring about just living.

Byrne's expression of the notion of bias is placed at the centre of the heuristic framework of Lonergan's systematic approach to theology: precisely at the juncture between the fourth and fifth functional specialties:³³⁶ dialectics and foundations, where the structure itself moves from humanly *mediating* theology to divinely *mediated* theology. Byrne notes that the first four functional specialties (culminating in dialectics) are designed to aid the scholar with appropriating the historical actions, values, and meanings that other scholars before us have identified. But by moving into the second set of functional specialties, beginning

³³⁵ Byrne explores Lonergan's question of the value of valuing extensively in "Analogical Knowledge of God and the Value of Moral Endeavour," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies*, 11 (1993) 103-135.

³³⁶ While not irrelevant to my discussion here, it is important to reiterate a point that Byrne makes concerning the system of the eight functional specialties. He notes that the processes of ethical intentionality involve conscious acts including but not limited to experiencing, inquiring, direct insights, reflection, feelings, judgments of fact and value, etc. Yet "what distinguishes a given functional specialty is not that it exercises just one kind of act (e.g. understanding), but that it exercises all the acts in pursuit of producing results that ultimately are the content of just one kind of act ... [and] the works of one functional specialty provide the materials for other functional specialties, in just the same way as the contents of one act of consciousness become sources for subsequent acts of consciousness" according to the structure of ethical intentionality. Therefore, it takes the entire process of ethical intentionality to produce the outcome of one specialty, but that outcome also complements and contributes to the other functional specialties. See Patrick Byrne, *The Ethics of Discernment*, 429.

with foundations, one must make a determined, conscious decision to *be* within that function, as it requires the scholar to decide precisely *how* she will perform in terms of ethical intentionality.³³⁷ Not only is this decision about the future, based on the knowledge appropriated in the first four functions, but it also constitutes itself as an emergent probability.³³⁸ For my purposes here, the significant point is exactly what that successful leap from dialectics to foundations entails.

The goal of the functional specialty of dialectics is critical analysis of ethical and unethical expressions of human living. It seeks to reveal the positions and counterpositions of linked but opposed principles of change driven by intersubjectivity and practical intelligence. "Dialectic becomes methodical by taking as its sources the critical, scholarly studies of researchers, interpreters, and

³³⁷ Patrick Byrne, *The Ethics of Discernment*, 428.

³³⁸ The notion of emergent probability is likely one of Lonergan's most complex and dense. Indeed few who have immersed themselves in Lonergan's thought have attempted to tackle it thoroughly. By no means have I tried to do so. Nonetheless, it is an important factor in effectuating his solution to bias, and of how human living can decisively participate to set the conditions needed for causing and realizing a higher viewpoint of ethical just living which, by ultimate necessity, involves greater cooperation with God's gift of grace. At its most basic level, emergent probability is a heuristic of the process in the universe where human being is proportionate to human knowing. In this light, the universe is seen as a system of occurrences of being and knowing, constituting almost countless systems of systems. Lonergan's concise definition is as follows: "Emergent probability affirms a conditioned series of schemes of recurrence that are realized in accord with successive schedules of probabilities." See Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 156. Conditions that affect series of schemes of recurrence are one of two types: those that are non-systematized and occur due to coincidence, and those that emerge because they are conditioned to do so. The emergence of a higher viewpoint, such as that which would bring about a cluster of insights capable and willed to shorten the longer cycle of decline, emerges because lower systems of knowing and being can no longer adequately respond to the questions and insights they generate. Examples of this would be a continued over-reliance on common sense understanding to solve problems that require higher integrations of thought and meaning, or Lonergan's explanation of the emergence of higher, more advanced forms of science. In effect what happens on the level of the knower is a profound shift where the logical outcome in answering a set of questions does not bring about a solution. A higher viewpoint then emerges due to the restrictions of the lower viewpoint. For the purposes of my discussion here, suffice it to say it is the conditions that can be put in place to bring about a more desired future which support my overall argument.

historians, and by bringing the sources of objective evaluation into play.”³³⁹ Such sources constitute the data of previous bipolar dialectical analyses. From Lonergan’s perspective, dialectic seeks to identify historical (and I would argue current) conflicts that arose due to the lack of Lonergan’s notions of conversions (intellectual, moral, and religious) in terms of the agents of the particular dialectic in question *and* the theologian who assesses it.³⁴⁰ Thus, it seeks to reveal the biases that have contributed not only to the conflict (in terms of the conflict’s opposed principles of change), but also those that have influenced the positions and counterpositions that are developed by scholars in their attempts to characterize and analyze the conflict in question as well.

This is a key feature that differentiates a more traditional group-bias analysis, such as that of liberation and feminist theologies, from what Lonergan proposes. As Byrne explains: If we take positions to be statements that are logically consistent with other statements and are reflective of the structure of ethical intentionality, and if we take counterpositions to be inconsistent with the activity and processes of ethical intentionality, what the dialectician actually does is to make a value judgment toward deciding how ethical the dialectic in question actually is based on her assessment of the conflict in question as worked out and presented by previous scholars.

³³⁹ Patrick Byrne, *The Ethics of Discernment*, 436.

³⁴⁰ Depending on the context or kind of dialectic being analyzed, I would also add Robert Doran’s notion of psychic conversion to these three. For instance if a particular conflict involved horrendous acts that in our day are considered to be war crimes, the psychic trauma of victims would be a factor calling forth psychic conversion. *Ressentiment*, I believe, would also fall into this category.

What the dialectician does with this previous work is to begin with the conflict as the starting point and then search for its origins in terms of positions and counterpositions. Thus the value of “dialectic in [Lonergan’s] sense situates interpretations and histories in a larger context”; put another way, while critical theorists attempt to locate the context of a conflict in terms of its *Sitz im Leben*, Lonergan’s approach to dialectic analysis reflects the larger context of *Sitz in die Geschichte*.³⁴¹ And this is done precisely by the dialectician by using her own structure of ethical intentionality, thereby adding what was missing from the work carried out by previous scholars. The final picture is more accurate and lends itself to objective valuation, as Byrne writes, guided by the unrestricted notion of value and unrestricted being-in-love set decisively within Lonergan’s normative scale of values.

Moreover, this process reveals how a dialectic fits within the larger history of systems of decline and advancement. While some liberation theologians attempt to situate a particular type of oppression within its historical context, generally speaking their goal is to eradicate the oppressive force(s), not to transform those who perpetrate oppression. Lonergan, on the other hand, looks to transform all agents in the dialectic by placing it within larger dialectical movements of historical decline, progress, and most important of all, redemption. This is done not with the structures of society and systems of oppression as the object of study, but with the

³⁴¹ Patrick Byrne, *The Ethics of Discernment* 438.

objectification of subjective and biased differences of all agents, and most especially beginning with the converted theological practitioner:

Insofar as the work of predecessors is lacking in conversion, it will heighten tensions in the scholar that will inspire the quest for their proper resolution, which comes only in conversion...[by responding] to such examples with apprehensions of their values [through the process of ethical intentionality].³⁴²

Indeed, when the process of ethical intentionality becomes normative for the dialectician, he is invited and challenged to move toward a converted state of being—professionally and personally. By discovering the inauthenticity in past positions and counterpositions of dialectical analysis, one inevitably asks questions of authenticity about oneself. If the theologian fully commits to the search for intelligibility, truth, reality, and goodness, the commitment becomes normative in terms of ethical discernment: she becomes committed to the ongoing process of self-discernment of biases that impede her authentic living and work. In sum, for one who is morally converted, the cognitive process of ethical discernment in Lonergan's specialty of dialectic is the same as that in one's life: the two serve to reinforce each other as an emergent condition for the discovery of authenticity in human living.

Ethical discernment in the work of the theological dialectician brings to light biases, as discussed above, including that of *ressentiment*. In his 1993 article in *Theological Studies*, "Ressentiment and the Preferential Option for the Poor",

³⁴² Patrick Byrne, *The Ethics of Discernment*, 440.

Byrne echoes Scheler's and Nietzsche's use of the term *ressentiment*,³⁴³ as a type of re-feeling that directly stems from one's previous feelings of a perceived or real injury where one recalls feelings of impotence in the face of value challenges. More specifically, it functions as "an inability to let go of that experience; one keeps reliving and rehearsing, causing it to swell and fester."³⁴⁴ Without repeating my previous examination of the notion in chapter 2, it is important to note that *ressentiment* is a scotosis as Lonergan uses the term and has a significant impact on one's ability to value accurately.

When experiencing *ressentiment*, its effects are real and damaging because re-feeling distorts the feelings involved in value preference, as Byrne points out in reference to Scheler's account, causing one to believe that a particular value is good in and of itself, when in fact it is not. Such a value is perceived as something to be coveted: "It follows that the...main characteristics of resentment, impotency and the lack of attainability, are always mixed with constant comparisons made with other persons who possess certain desired goods and are not themselves resentful."³⁴⁵ The effect of such constant comparisons with those who possess one's incorrectly perceived and coveted value cannot but negatively stunt self-esteem, thereby limiting one's effective agency in positive value determination and judgment.

³⁴³ It is important to point out the while Byrne does not agree with Nietzsche's argument that the notion of Christianity's tradition of justice for the poor is purely a matter of *ressentiment*, he does remark that it still constitutes a profound critique in itself. See: Byrne, "Ressentiment and the Preferential Option for the Poor," fn 4, 215.

³⁴⁴ Patrick Byrne, "Ressentiment and the Preferential Option for the Poor," 217.

³⁴⁵ Manfred Frings, "Max Scheler And The Psychopathology Of The Terrorist," *Modern Age* 47:3 (2005): 213.

It also causes an ongoing painful tension within the person's horizon of feelings, which requires release. Put another way,

in *ressentiment*, actual feelings of value preference are a compound of the spontaneous and normative feelings of preference for the objective scale of values on the one hand, and the secondary reactions that modify and distort those primordial feelings of preference, on the other. Such secondary reactions [the *ressentiment* itself] are in tension with the retained primordial feelings which they modify and the scale they intend. These unresolved tensions are also felt, and therefore point back to the objective scale of value preference, providing an internal access to that scale.³⁴⁶

This is not to say that *ressentiment* is the only kind of distortion of the scale of values. But clearly it presents itself as a distortion competing with the fundamental feelings of good value preference and that of unrestricted being-in-love from which objective value preferences arise.³⁴⁷ Lonergan argues throughout *Insight* that the primordial and ultimate orientation of a human being is God, directed through the acts of unrestricted questioning and insights. He is worth quoting at length on this point:

God is the unrestricted act of understanding, the eternal rapture glimpsed in every Archimedian cry of 'Eureka.' Understanding meets questions for intelligence and questions for reflection. The unrestricted act meets all at once; for it understands understanding and all the intelligibility based on it; and it understands its own understanding as unrestricted, invulnerable, true. What is known by true understanding is being, and the being known by unrestricted understanding's self-knowledge is primary being, self-explanatory, unconditioned, necessary and without any lack or defect. The good is the intelligible, and so the primary being also is the primary good. As intelligibility without intelligence would be defective, so also would truth without affirming, or the good without loving; but God is

³⁴⁶ Patrick Byrne, *The Ethics of Discernment*, 254.

³⁴⁷ Patrick Byrne, *The Ethics of Discernment*, 254-255.

without defect, not because the act of understanding is complemented by further acts, but by a single act that at once is understanding and intelligible, truth and affirming, goodness and loving, being and omnipotence.³⁴⁸

The point I wish to make here, stemming from Byrne's argument that *ressentiment* distorts one's value orientation and thereby distorts one's own scale of values, is that as a form of bias and a distortion of value orientation, it constitutes a defect in one's perception of what the good truly is. It *is* the lack or defect that Lonergan speaks in the quotation above, the intelligibility that is oriented and restricted from intelligence. Byrne explains that

the insights which can effect a transformation of goods of order depend upon orientations. Conversion effects a transformation of orientation to a concern, to an interest in getting insights, which is nothing less than the unrestricted value of generalized emergent probability values and made actual by God's unrestricted loving.³⁴⁹

But more specifically, how does *ressentiment* constitute a distortion beyond skewing our orientation, or put more colloquially, *clouding our judgment*? Byrne explains that in ethical intentionality it acts directly at the point of deliberation and responsibility in response to our present feelings. If those feelings are caused by a *ressentiment* (e.g., anger, resentment, envy, jealousy, hate), in effect our feelings will help to determine whether further pertinent questions are asked when deliberating about a possible course of action, including "What should I do?" or "What should be done?"

³⁴⁸ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 706-707.

³⁴⁹ Patrick Byrne, "Ressentiment and the Preferential Option for the Poor," 236.

Byrne delineates two points in the process of deliberation that are affected by this distortion:

- a. in reaching common sense judgments of fact, the pertinence of further questions is dictated by whether their answers will yield an 'immediate difference to me' and b. the criterion of pertinence of further questions as it pertains to correct explanatory insights: will the further question lead to a difference in my understanding of 'how things relate to one another?'³⁵⁰

Citing Lonergan,³⁵¹ Byrne notes that when one's feelings are oriented toward self-transcendence, then one is oriented toward values beyond one's own satisfactions and dissatisfactions. So when self-transcending feelings are allowed to emerge unimpeded and are guided by the process of unrestricted deliberation, the process of moral self-transcendence ensues, reinforcing one's orientation toward the ultimate good.

On this note, Byrne makes one very important point that is germane to my overall presentation: "...to insist that the 'value of values' must be answered in immanently *human* terms results in a distortion of the value of values."³⁵² I return to my earlier argument that theological valuation and moral deliberation are not theological merely because of the subject matter or reference to dogma or scripture, but precisely because it seeks to include God as a necessary active agent in the process. For the contextual theologian, this means subsuming the fruits

³⁵⁰ Patrick Byrne, "Analogical Knowledge of God and the Value of Moral Endeavour" 119. For brevity's sake I have only included the main points of Byrne's extensive work on the role of feelings and phantasms in moral deliberation, as it relates to my discussion here on *ressentiment*..

³⁵¹ See Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 226, 285-293.

³⁵² Patrick Byrne, "Analogical Knowledge of God and the Value of Moral Endeavour" 133. Emphasis mine.

of a bipolar dialectical analysis of positions and counterpositions within the work of a tripolar analysis that includes God's act of grace as part of the process to arrive at the solution to oppression.

In this sense, grace is not merely a guide or signpost giving direction to arrive at solutions for justice but is part of the actual justice solution. For when one's ethical intentionality is decisively working toward the fourth level of human consciousness (being in love with God in an unrestricted fashion), "the source of one's judgments of value invoke a share in God's own love and unrestricted judgment of value."³⁵³

Byrne makes an interesting observation about those who work for social justice in the face of oppressive forces, including theologians, when discussing the relationship between the notion of the preferential option for the poor (of liberation theologies) and *ressentiment*: "Too often it seemed to me, a desire to aid the poor, suffering, or marginalized people, initially motivated by genuine charity, became infected with a *ressentiment* against the rich, the successful, and the powerful."³⁵⁴ If this is the case, that means that *ressentiment* as a type of bias not only affects

³⁵³ Patrick Byrne, "Ressentiment and the Preferential Option for the Poor," 226.

³⁵⁴ Patrick Byrne, "Ressentiment and the Preferential Option for the Poor," 214. On this note, another phenomenon may be worth exploring, perhaps as a negative consequence or a by-product of *ressentiment*, that of 'compassion fatigue'. Originally coined in 1995, it can culminate in indifference to charitable appeals of those who are suffering, experienced as a result of the frequency or number of such appeals; thus one becomes almost overwhelmed by feelings of impotence regarding one's ability to effectuate help for those needing it. It can also include a persistent loss of hope in the face of the amount and extent of aid needed. While compassion fatigue is a well-documented phenomenon in the field of psychology and social trauma most especially regarding those who professionally treat trauma victims, I believe a question to be considered is whether it takes the form of a *ressentiment* against those who most need aid: the destitute, the homeless, the poor. On compassion fatigue, see: C.F. Figley (ed.), *Compassion Fatigue: Coping with Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder in Those Who Treat the Traumatized* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

the perceived self-objectivity of the critical theologian, but that as a force it has been and continues to be an active component in history.

Thus, *ressentiment* can and does form the primary value-motivation in certain specific instances. It leads people to distort the highest and most profound values, including Christian values, and turn these values into their opposites, even to the point the inverted value-apprehension comes to predominate. This, it seems to me, is the great truth of Nietzsche's critique.³⁵⁵

It is also therefore a component of historical decline that can be revealed through dialectics.

It is a fair question to ask then how *ressentiment*, as a bias, can operate on the level of theological analysis. To answer this question, Byrne has taken the notion of the preferential option for the poor (POTP) and assessed it from the perspective of Lonergan's scale of value preference and his transcendental notion of value itself. Byrne rightly notes that the concept of the POTP is controversial and often misinterpreted, evoking many questions such as: does God actually prefer the poor and how are Christians to live out this option and, perhaps more importantly, "why is a specifically preferential option for the poor, over and above Christian love of the poor along with all of God's creatures, called for"?³⁵⁶ Byrne defines it as decisive and active

conversion to God's valuing of the universe, and therefore to the intelligibilities intrinsic to it...[T]he option is not for the poor as poor, but for the poor, their suffering and oppression, as witness to the need to sublimate all the real but finite goodnesses of human achievements into the greater good that God values.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁵ Patrick Byrne, "Ressentiment and the Preferential Option for the Poor," 221.

³⁵⁶ Patrick Byrne, "Ressentiment and the Preferential Option for the Poor", 214.

³⁵⁷ Patrick Byrne, "Ressentiment and the Preferential Option for the Poor", 242.

Moreover, it is not a preference that is compatible with bias, including *ressentiment*.

Byrne argues further that if *ressentiment* is active in one's response to the notion of POTP, one's understanding of the POTP is also skewed. The response is not only to the reprehensible state of those living in poverty, but also to the abuses and corruption of the powerful and the wealthy who seemingly have caused such a state of poverty. Like Byrne, I do not wish to imply that there are not wealthy and powerful forces in society who are responsible for causing poverty, but rather I believe his argument here is that a response to the POTP that carries with it a common sense-based *ressentiment* against the rich and powerful in general, situates and limits the objective values of power and wealth into a generalized, common sense, and skewed approach to those who are wealthy and powerful regardless of whether they are abusive or corrupt.³⁵⁸

Wealth and power are values in human history and continue to be, both of which can and do have objective value. But it is the abuse of power and wealth, a bias in and of itself, that constitutes a negative response in terms of the poor, such as illegal logging in Brazilian rainforests and abusive labour practices of global corporations in Central and South America, Southeast Asia, and India. Yet there are regular and intelligible achievements of corporations large and small. Thus, in

³⁵⁸ Patrick Byrne, "*Ressentiment* and the Preferential Option for the Poor", 229.

any historical situation, any response to human oppression must differentiate between intelligibilities for development and reversal.³⁵⁹

In Lonergan's language, this includes the systematic relationships between conversions, orientations, and the human good as a developing object of love. *Ressentiment*, even in the person who is motivated by God's love for all, skews one's search for the intelligibility of loving one's enemy as God does. In effect, it impedes our agency to respond cooperatively to grace and self-transcendence. In the theologian, it restricts one from authentically carrying out a tripolar dialectical analysis, which brings us full circle back to the beginning of this chapter and Doran's discussion of the fruits of the full turn to interiority at the third stage of meaning. Where one would have previously identified and judged biases and dialectic through a lens of incomplete insights and judgments derived from the first two stages of meaning, one now judges and more importantly responds to them with a grace-based love. Indeed, Aquinas reminds us that love is not measured by what is given but by the end willed. I would humbly add to that statement: love is not measured by what is given to the poor and taken away from the rich, but perhaps by myriad conditions that can be willingly put in place to effect long-term good in human living.

4.3. Concluding Comments

In reference to René Girard's notion of *Le Souci de la Victime*, Charles Taylor argues that in our postmodern Western society, the victim has taken on a

³⁵⁹ Patrick Byrne, "*Ressentiment* and the Preferential Option for the Poor," 229.

role not previously realized in the past. Echoing Girard, he notes that our collective concern for the victim is a key characteristic of the modern world in that “we rescue and recognize all the victims,” and credits this to the enormous influence that the New Testament has had on Western civilization.³⁶⁰ He writes:

There is a narrative of the modern world, like and parallel to that of the growth of freedom, democracy, which sees us as redressing all the historical wrongs and inequalities...but this is connected to the moralism of meting out punishment to perpetrators, victimizers...that we move toward the ultimate order through the unmasking of hidden victimizations, which are covered up, denied, and have to be denounced. So it is part of the dynamic theory of how we move toward the order, not prescribed by the order itself—which was, after all, originally used for the justification of the established structures, or what underlay these structures, the proper constitution of power, as for instance, with Locke...[It] becomes part of the ethic of our time, the political ethic. Joined to a view of history, this yields a transfigured version of the modern moral order as eschatological idea. This becomes, on one hand, a great force for battling against injustices. But it also becomes a way of drawing lines, denouncing enemies, the evil ones.³⁶¹

I believe that general identification and relation to the victim in this manner is a direct outgrowth of the effectiveness and development of critical theory in the last century and it reflects the approach of many feminist theologians and critical theorists who look to awarding agency to the victims of patriarchal oppression by dismantling the power structures in the society of the oppressor. This is noble and necessary, but does not address the limiting nature of victimhood and how victims can claim and assert agency aside from the dismantling of patriarchal structures. I

³⁶⁰ Charles Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections: Selected Essays* (London: Belknap Press, 2011) 207.

³⁶¹ Charles Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 207-208.

agree with Taylor that one effect is that the claim to victimhood and our solidarity with victims asserts our purity, that “we are all right.” While identification and solidarity with victims of oppression is valid and can be a force for effectuating good in society, it is not a complete solution, however. It can also, as Taylor writes, draw the battle lines against the oppressor, “the evil ones.” This in itself is divisive and contributes to the overall dialectic of oppression and cycles of decline, for an evil one cannot be transformed into an enemy to be loved.

Nevertheless, identifying evil-doing in oppressive contexts is not the same as locating its source. Analyzing its manifestation is necessary, yet can we vanquish it as a phenomenon if we cannot pinpoint its source? Taylor notes that only one of three tried methods points toward a possible solution to the wide-scale violence that has occurred in Western civilization over the last several centuries. The other two methods have failed: a. the post-Enlightenment call to secularity to avoid religious violence, and b. the strengthening of ordered democratic polities that work to prevent the establishment of excluded groups. In short, group bias still thrives. But a third option is a credible one, argues Taylor, as the religious dimension of human life is inescapable. Thus, the option is “to overcome fear by offering oneself to it; responding with love and forgiveness” thereby tapping into religious love.³⁶²

This reflects, albeit peripherally, what Robert Doran, Matthew Lamb, and Patrick Byrne have studied in terms of Lonergan’s notion of dialectic and the

³⁶² Charles Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 209.

mediating force of grace. With this in mind, I wish to summarize the contributions that these three scholars offer to this study.

Like Lonergan himself, Robert Doran's corpus is wide and deep. His notion of psychic conversion (a fourth conversion beyond Lonergan's three), offers valuable insights into the combined effects of the group and general biases within the heuristic of his interpretation of Lonergan's scale of values and, perhaps more importantly, how bias emerges from the three stages of meaning: common sense, theoretical, and interiority. Doran's emphasizes the necessity of making the full turn to interiority by appropriating one's own cognitive operations and as a profoundly existential process that enlarges one's horizon of meaning to allow one to knowingly differentiate types of consciousness on all three realms of meaning.

This process resembles theory and a heightening of intentional consciousness, but is really a deliberate attending to oneself. This process to full interiority, as part of Lonergan's GEM, constitutes self-transcendence, subsuming common sense and theory, and brings about a true objective critical stance from the original perspective of subjectivity that thinks it is objective. For the theologian, this means that interiority provides the foundation of objectivity against the backdrop of Lonergan's foundational questions, pointing toward the fruits of a higher viewpoint in response to dialectical contexts and the skewed values they produce. Such a higher viewpoint is constituted by authenticity in critical analysis where one is able to authenticate the values of objective human living and review those meanings and values already appropriated from the first two realms of meaning.

However, the greatest fruits of the process of affective self-transcendence, as Doran explains, is that it leads us to the fourth stage of meaning—religiously transcendent meaning where focus and concern become fixed on God’s values: faith, hope and most especially, charity.

The significance for the contextual theologian is that where one would have previously identified and judged biases and dialectic through a lens of incomplete insights and judgments (from the first two realms of meaning), one now judges and more importantly responds to them with a love from God’s gift of grace. In other words, God’s grace also begets a new, previously unpossessed, objectivity that focuses on the good of human of living over and above the spoils of personal satisfactions and biases. Such a change in valuing also effectuates re-visioning of the data of common sense in order to envision a higher viewpoint of human living, thereby working with the general bias to realize its solution.

Without the full turn to interiority in the third realm of meaning and the process of self-transcendence to personal authenticity, one does not yet possess the methodological tools needed to authentically analyze the group bias nor identify the general bias as operative, leading to the misdiagnosis that oppression is merely driven by the group bias. As such, he misdiagnoses the problem of oppression as driven only by the group bias. In short, Doran’s analysis of these two types of bias leads the dialectician to realize that she must become an originating value herself—in the normative order of inquiry. She must realize that her own self-narrative is part of the dialectical process she questions.

In this way, the theologian comes to realize that the group and general biases reinforce each other in three ways: a. structural and legal remedies to oppressive forces appeal to the commonsense stage of meaning and therefore lack long-term vision and insight into the real problem; b. this approach exacerbates the overlooked but operative general bias, which never resolves the dialectical tension evident in the first place on the level of social self-constitution and culture; and c. since justice-based solutions to social dialectic are humanly designed and implemented, they do not incorporate the gift of God's grace. As Doran argues, the solution is not solely human, but is meant to be found and implemented in conjunction with God.

Matthew Lamb's melding of the Lonerganian notion of dialectic and critical theory as it emerged in the last quarter of the twentieth century is valuable for a number of insights. His primary contribution in this regard, I believe, is that he aligned Gutierrez' notion of solidarity with the necessity of the self-transcendence and liberation of the theologian. Lamb effectively argues that without this transformation, the theologian cannot truly be in solidarity with the victim. Therefore, the methodology of the contextual theologian is re-oriented to reflect the self-conscious reorientation of the theologian, a purely subjective but necessary move.

Lamb argues that mediation of the past with the present is not enough for the theologian, effectively taking Catholic theology out of the confines of its classicist tradition. While he does not discount the truth and importance of the dogma of faith, like Lonergan, he believes it must be constantly re-interpreted in

light of the current context of human living. It is precisely due to his appropriation of Lonergan's thought on theological method that he sees beyond the Enlightenment turn to the subject and the evolving body of critical theories in the late twentieth century, to theological method grounded in transcendent transformation, directly reflecting the self-transcendence of the theologian.

In terms of method, Lamb calls on the strength of the hermeneutic of suspicion and, in fact, does not relinquish the major steps of critical methodology in terms of praxis. Yet he firmly argues that political theology should transform those who want to abolish oppression into people with more Christ-like identities, including the theologian. Lamb calls on Lonergan's transcendental precepts to lead us toward the three conversions. Thus, he sublates the foundations of critical theology with Lonergan's GEM to reveal the dialectic at hand for what it truly is. Finally, citing Lonergan's retrieval of Aquinas, Lamb points to the imperative act of questioning as heuristic performance, which *should* lead to the challenge and analysis of tradition and faith doctrine in the face of changing human sociological circumstances.

Lamb argues that the chief limitations of critical theory are threefold. First, he notes that it assumes that dialectical analysis can be carried out with the capacity of reason and objective analysis of the empirical data as it presents itself in the context. But it restricts itself by only looking empirically at the data to be studied, again believing it to be objective, thereby eschewing the necessary role of the theologian's actual related and recurrent operations of consciousness (what we do when we know), as well as consciously being open to gaining those insights

through the unrestricted questioning. Without the knowledge gained from such self-reflective data, one remains in the limited world of logic and controlled meaning and, therefore, is not equipped to qualify *is* and *ought* questions and intellectual, moral, and religious values.

Lamb also hones in on the inadequacy of structural solutions to oppressive contexts. Describing critical theory as disclosive in terms of dialectically opposing horizons of meaning and value, he argues ultimately they are inadequate if they minimize the transformative effect of religious and doctrinal symbols on those who are affected by the dialectic. Rather, structural solutions (e.g., removal of an oppressive force) do not emphasize the interior transformation for those who perpetrate and are effected by oppressive forces. And such solutions are really only temporary ones precisely because they appeal to short-term, practical, common sense thinking. Thus Lamb focuses specifically on the interior transformation of subject and object, not the material structures of oppression. He reminds us that this was a key shortcoming of Marx in his approach to dialectical analysis.

Given this limitation of traditional critical theory, three repercussions ensue: it is uncritical of itself, unaware of its own presuppositions; in its application of scientific methods, it is guilty of the general bias, and therefore does not seek value-based judgments; and it does not identify valid agents *for* social transformation, but points to the change in social structures as the basis of solutions.

Lamb's argument is cogent. Even within many praxis-oriented theologies, more weight seems to be placed on the importance of dismantling structural oppression as the chief means to overcoming domination and exploitation than the transcendental agency of those who perpetrate and are affected by it. Rather, from his perspective, social change must emerge from the interior transformation of its agents guided and fueled by grace.

Finally, Lamb maintains that Lonergan's goal in dialectical discernment is twofold: to uncover the sin of oppression and to determine *how* the relative values or disvalues are operating within a particular context. Thus, in contrast to empirically-based historical-critical methodologies that aim to uncover empirical data (e.g., data that reveal the presence and effects of an oppressive context), a transformative dialectical analysis seeks to uncover the values and disvalues that drive the opposed positions within the dialectical context. In so doing, it must analyze the values that drive all parties to the conflict in order to reveal the truth of differentiations in developments and aberrations on that scale.

Patrick Byrne's approach to ethical discernment is firmly rooted in Lonergan's method of theology—that is, morally converted thinking, valuing, deciding, and action. To get to the *heart*, or rather the cognitive basis for bias, as that which prevents us from acting morally, he frames his discussion on ethical morality in terms of Lonergan's question of the value of valuing and the notion of *ressentiment*. In so doing, he takes one from a bipolar dialectical examination of positions and counterpositions (that of traditional critical theory) to one that is tripolar in its approach, reflecting Lonergan's solution to bias and human decline.

Byrne's discussion of bias is situated at the juncture between Lonergan's fourth and fifth functional specialties for theological method: dialectics and foundations, where the theologian intentionally moves from humanly *mediating* theology to divinely *mediated* theological work.

Given that dialectics seeks to analyze positions and counterpositions of principles of change (and the biases therein), Byrne also points out that Lonergan's approach also seeks to reveal the biases of those who have set such positions and those who have previously critically analyzed the same. This is a key feature that differentiates a more traditional group-bias analysis, such as that of liberation and feminist theologies, from what Lonergan proposes. As Byrne explains, this allows the dialectician to make a value judgment of the ethical authenticity of the dialectic in question worked out and interpreted by previous scholars. And this is done precisely by the dialectician's own structure of ethical intentionality, thereby adding what was missing from the work carried out by previous scholars.

The outcome then lends itself to objective valuation, as Byrne writes, guided by the unrestricted notion of value and unrestricted being-in-love set decisively within Lonergan's normative scale of values. This process also reflects Lonergan's approach to historical consciousness and the larger systems of decline and advancement and, theologically and more importantly, redemption.

Like Doran and Lamb, Byrne does not focus on the structures of society and systems of oppression as the object of study, but rather the objectification of subjective and biased differences of all agents. This approach correctly reveals the true source of bias as human, not social structures and forces. Most especially, it

brings to light the role of the theologian and the level to which he finds himself in the process of ethical intentionality. In effect, the theologian is revealed as an emergent condition for the discovery of authenticity in human living. Yet, if the theologian harbours bias, say a *ressentiment*, in her approach to dialectics, her own valuation and ultimate orientation toward God are skewed. Quite simply, in the example of the preferential option for the poor, if *ressentiment* is active in one's critical response, one's understanding of the notion itself is also skewed.

Accordingly, Byrne takes us from a bipolar (progress and decline) to a tripolar dialectic that emphasizes the necessity of God's act of grace as part of the process to arrive at the solution to oppression, thereby adding redemption as the third element to human history. More than a guiding force to aid the theologian or help to point out a suitable justice, it is through the traversing of the third and fourth stages of meaning that grace is revealed as a pivotal part of the solution to human oppression.

In a presentation that Lonergan gave in Montreal in 1975 called "Healing and Creating in History,"³⁶³ he spoke about the dynamic of the relationship between the human and divine capacities to create, saying it is only the act of divine creating that can create something out of nothing. Humans, on the other hand, seem to create from nothing, but really do so with what is available, resulting in a system that is never complete, never whole. Because bias permeates

³⁶³ Bernard Lonergan, "Healing and Creating in History," *A Third Collection: Papers*, Frederick Crowe (ed.) (New York: Paulist Press, 1985).

everything humans are capable of devising, it also permeates the process of growth:

This wheel of progress becomes a wheel of decline when the process is distorted by bias. Increasingly the situation becomes, not the cumulative product of coherent and complementary insights, but the dump in which are heaped up the amorphous and incompatible products of all the biases of self-centered and shortsighted individuals and groups.³⁶⁴

This describes, in one sense, the history of humanity. While one could argue that humans continue to benefit from progress, it is technological progress and the fact is that the detrimental effects of bias still remain even within a system of progress.

Therefore, what hope is there? Lonergan speaks of the divine healing vector whose trajectory is from above downwards to humanity, that without this force continuing to work throughout history, we are doomed to see only hatred. Yet, it is precisely because of this divine presence working in our world that we are able to see that “love breaks the bonds of psychological and social determinisms with the conviction of faith and the power of hope.”³⁶⁵ The simple point that Lonergan makes is that we cannot develop as a species *on our own* to eradicate bias and oppression.

³⁶⁴ Bernard Lonergan, *Healing and Creating in History*, 105.

³⁶⁵ Bernard Lonergan, *Healing and Creating in History*, 106.

Chapter 5. The Application of Lonergan's Notions of Dialectic and Bias in the Work of M. Shawn Copeland³⁶⁶

To resist social oppression of human and cultural difference, to resist sexism and homophobia and classism and exploitation and marginalization is to embrace actively a future yet unimagined and yet unborn.

M. Shawn Copeland³⁶⁷

If the body, the flesh of Jesus, is the 'hinge of salvation,' then the embrace of the church must swing open and wide.

M. Shawn Copeland³⁶⁸

5.1. Introduction: Copeland's Approach to Dialectic and Oppression

There are really only a few feminist theologians who significantly employ Lonergan's thought. I chose Shawn Copeland's work in this regard since her work

³⁶⁶ Before launching into this chapter, I want to share my sense of apprehension in attempting to appropriate themes and methodology in Copeland's womanist theology. Let me explain. First, I agree with Copeland and other feminist theologians who write from their particular socio/cultural/sexual perspective (e.g., womanist, Latina, mujerista, Asian, African, queer, etc.) in their charge that feminist theology as a collected body of thought grew out of and represented the views and experiences of privileged white Western women who largely assumed that their theology represented that of all women. These charges mirror those of secular feminist theorists of first wave and certainly second wave Western feminism. I would argue that this outlook is still apparent in many feminist theologies. My apprehension, however, stems from my own personal socio-cultural and sexual identity that really reflects the white privileged Western perspective as well as the challenge of trying to comprehend the experience of an oppressed group of which one is not a member. That said, I strongly believe, as I hope to be effectively arguing in this project, that Lonergan's value for contextual theologians is critical since it seeks to cultivate the personal transcendence and authenticity of the theologian precisely from where she is self-situated; one of the fruits of the process of interiority and transcendence is the expansion of one's horizon of meaning to deliberately seek out and learn of and from difference, or in Dr. Copeland's words, "the cognitive, moral, and religious authenticity of poor, excluded and despised black women." It is really to ask, again and again, what can the other teach me so that 'the other' is no longer the other but becomes a co-creator in a just future. That said, I do not intend to impose any unknown personal bias or nescience in my attempt to appropriate Shawn Copeland's work. Quotation taken from M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010) 63.

³⁶⁷ M. Shawn Copeland, "The Power of Difference: Understanding, Appreciating, Critiquing Difference", *The Ecumenist*, 43:2 (Spring 2006): 9.

³⁶⁸ M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 5.

not only resonates with my own as a feminist and student of Lonergan, but primarily because in reading her analyses of oppression against women, it becomes obvious that Lonergan brings another layer of inspection to the problem of inquiry and perhaps more importantly places her solution to the problem squarely on a solid theological foundation of divine-human interrelation.³⁶⁹

In light of Lonergan's thought as presented in chapters three and four, the primary purpose of this chapter is to answer the following question: As a womanist theologian, what is Shawn Copeland doing, when she does theology?³⁷⁰ This is a very Lonerganian introspection and she attempted to answer this question herself very early on in her theological career, even prior to completing her doctoral dissertation, which focused on Lonergan's notion and application of the human good. As part of a 1989 roundtable response to Cheryl Sander's commentary on the application of the term *womanist* for theological scholarship, Copeland wrote:

For an African American woman scholar to define herself, to name herself womanist is to embrace, to love her culture and religio-cultural traditions, her people, her people's struggle, her own embodiment...to tap into the roots of the historical traditional liberation capability of black women... Womanist intimates a critical posture towards sexism, towards misogyny, towards the objectification and abuse of black women within the academy, within the African American community, within the dominant patriarchal culture...[to] consciously name and reject the intimidations, manipulations, and seductions of patriarchal power, privilege and place; and [to] self-consciously link the historical and explicit struggle of the race with the struggles of *all* oppressed, marginalized, brutalized, ostracized women and men. It seems to me

³⁶⁹ Copeland is not the only contextual theologian who applies Lonergan in her work. Cynthia Crysdale has also written a number of works in this vein. See in particular her edited work, *Lonergan and Feminism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).

³⁷⁰ Due to space constraints, I am unable to study and present her entire, extensive body of work, but rather those works which will allow me to appropriate her use of Lonergan.

that a womanist perspective can contribute to the reshaping and expansion of black theology.³⁷¹

Some years later, in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Copeland wrote again of her own questioning of what it is theologians do and should do in direct relation to who they are and the solution to the problem of evil in the world:

theology can make a contribution not only by exposing ways in which structure and systems are disordered and deformed, but also by turning a light on the ultimate and transcendent solution to the problem of evil, to the realization of a common human good...just what that contribution will be is contingent on who we are as theologians...How are we theologians to speak God's word in these times? How are we to understand our theological vocation? How are we to offer what we have to the struggle for authentic human liberation from within our culture?³⁷²

A number of points strike me when comparing these two passages. In the first, Copeland's description of womanist theology is definitive, assured, and cogent, particularly at a such an early point in her theological career. In this passage, she is also approaching the problem of black oppression in her country through a critical theoretical lens.

Yet, the second passage reflects a more nuanced sense of subjective interiority. Both passages address the problem of evil. Both speak to the value of theological method. Yet, in the second she questions what theologians should be doing at the turn of the century in the face of foreign threats that have not been

³⁷¹ M. Shawn Copeland, "Reply to Cheryl Sanders, 'Christian Ethics and Theology in Womanist Perspectives'", *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 5:2 (Fall 1989): 100-101.

³⁷² M. Shawn Copeland, "Racism and the Vocation of the Theologian", *Spiritus* 2:1 (2002) 15-16.

manifested previously in her country. It appears that the meaning she has garnered from her theoretical inquiry up to that point is being re-analyzed through the lens of her subjective interiority, coloured by theology and the historical consciousness of her changing culture in light of the ongoing problem of evil: precisely what Lonergan asks of all theologians through his GEM of subjective (the theologian) and objective (the object of theology) inquiry.

As previously stated, Copeland's approach to dialectic and oppression stems from the womanist perspective of liberation theology. Like feminist theologians, she specifically analyzes the body, being, and intersubjectivity of her subject matter in reference to the problem of evil in the form of racism and sexism. She exposes the hidden history of the persecution of black women's bodies and their being (precisely because their being is within a black female body), revealing the horrendous effects on them, their children, and their descendants. She presents the reality of their experiences as objects of evil persecution describing the intensity of pain, humiliation, brutality and often death primarily within the history of the framework of American slavery.

But this is not merely an exposé of an evil (and ongoing) oppressive history—although a necessary element of her theologizing. In doing so, Copeland employs the hermeneutic of suspicion (and retrieval), but she does not remain solely within that mode of inquiry. She also utilizes two further tools: a hermeneutic of resistance that allows her to move even further beyond her subject's oppression into a hermeneutic of critical realism à la Lonergan. Thus, in revealing the extent and type of oppression for what it is, Copeland then places it, in all its consuming

evil, within the Christian framework of resistance and redemption, recasting value, virtue, and hope in the light of God's Trinitarian grace.

Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly for my purposes here, Lonergan's thought, particularly GEM, methodologically underscores Copeland's work. I will attempt to explain Copeland's method in more detail, including her approach to dialectic and bias, but first I will offer a summary of what I view as key themes in her theology.

Finally, I will attempt to summarize the foregoing by explaining the value of her appropriation and use of Lonergan's thought for feminist theologies. I can say at this point, Copeland's application of Lonergan's thought has proven to be very valuable for my own.

5.2. Key Themes in Copeland's Womanist Theology

To be sure, the individual work of most contextual theologians comprises or fits within a unique heuristic framework whose pillars reflect certain themes such as emancipation, justice, love, solidarity, forgiveness, etc. In this way, contextual theology can be described as personal in that these individual themes, over time, come to represent the means by which that theologian draws meaning from the agents within their oppressive context; this situates the theologian to recommend solutions.

Based on Copeland's work (which spans just under three decades), I view three overriding themes: suffering, countering racism through Catholic Social Teaching (CST), and solidarity. It is important to note that each of these is viewed

through a historical lens and directly reflects the unique context that she studies. I now offer a summary of these themes.

5.2.1. Theme I: Suffering as Universal

To grasp the significance of the act of suffering in Copeland's work is by no means to begin with a simple premise or assumption about human phenomenology: that human suffering is a given in human history, a part of the human psyche. As previously stated, her retelling of horrific accounts of the suffering of black women in American history are graphic and unsettling but are not descriptive as such for their own sake. Although they are shocking (and should be), shock is not the purpose—rather it is to provide a detailed historical account of the dynamic experience of her subject. Her narrative examples of repeated torture and brutality, and the insidious acts of rape and death all serve “to interrogate memory and history for the sake of freedom.”³⁷³

Accordingly, these historical accounts, based on her own meticulous research and that of other scholars, are the experiential data for her contextual study. Indeed, it is the black woman's body (determinant of her oppression) that constitutes the nexus of Copeland's inquiry. As she reminds us, the body of the persecuted is continuously objectified. Where the body of the objectifier is already accepted and serves aesthetic and sensory functions for him, the body of the oppressed:

³⁷³ M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being*, 3.

constitutes the most public, the most personal, the most intimate thing that a human being possesses. Slavery deconstructed the black body into parts and by price; it obscured black human subjectivity, reassembled bodies as objects packaged for sale, and desecrated black embodied humanness...The antebellum slave market exposed, displayed and examined black flesh, turning people into objects for sale, purchase, and use...by sex, racial classification, age, and skill.³⁷⁴

Copeland conceptualizes suffering as an experience that continues throughout history and is common to all human beings, defining it as “the disturbance of our inner tranquility caused by physical, mental, emotional and spiritual forces that we grasp as jeopardizing our lives, our very existence...[W]hile never identical with evil, [it] is inseparable from it.”³⁷⁵ She is firm in her qualification that suffering and oppression do not fit within a hierarchical ranking where one’s experience of suffering counts as far worse or less than another, since no one is exempt from “the canon of anguish.” So while there may be many different kinds and experiences of suffering caused by oppression (e.g., ethnic, religious, racial, misogyny), any sort of effort to rank such experience is without purpose.

Each experience is historically situated, however. And like most feminist theologians, Copeland views the data of womanist theology, the experiences of black women, as “proper and serious data for theological reflection...to elucidate

³⁷⁴ M. Shawn Copeland, *The Subversive Power of Love: The Vision of Henriette Delille: The Madeleva Lecture in Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 2009) 34-35.

³⁷⁵ M. Shawn Copeland, “‘Wading Through Many Sorrows’: Toward a Theology of Suffering in Womanist Perspective”, in Charles Curran, et.al. (eds.), *Feminist Ethic and the Catholic Moral Tradition* (New York: Mahwah, 1996): 136-137.

the differentiated range and interconnections of black women's gender, racial-ethnic, cultural, religious and social (i.e., political, economic, and technological) oppression."³⁷⁶ Her theology does not reflect a classicist approach, but rather a historically conscious one that places the subject front and centre in terms of her particular experience.

Because Copeland views human suffering through the Christian lens, it is the crucifixion and death of Jesus that provides the soteriological meaning for her subject. As she argues: "to privilege suffering bodies in theological anthropology uncovers the suffering body at the heart of Christian belief."³⁷⁷ It is precisely within this very intersubjectivity, that of Jesus' suffering as our own and vice versa, that Copeland views the suffering body. It is where divine revelation is located, that the Triune God is living in all genders, races, and sexualities.

Copeland's theological anthropology is most strongly and effectively presented in her third chapter of *Enfleshing Freedom*: "Marking the Body of Jesus, the Body of Christ." In this chapter, Copeland re-situates the traditional Euro-centric notion of God's human identity and corporeal existence as male, white, (assumed) heterosexual, and without sin. She has two goals in doing so: that serious reflection on the body of Jesus and bodies of black women reveals the point of intersection between divine love and the inhumanity of bodily desecration, and that every human body is a site and mediation of divine revelation.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁶ M. Shawn Copeland, "'Wading Through Many Sorrows', 138.

³⁷⁷ M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 1.

³⁷⁸ M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 2-3.

By presenting Christ's body as marked, as having the same social identifiers as the desecrated human body (such as religion, gender, sexuality, race), Copeland not only reminds us that he was persecuted and killed for the same reasons that black women's bodies are, but places the spotlight on that point of intersection. She admits that this is risky theological work precisely because it runs the risk of "absolutizing or fetishizing what can be seen (race and sex), constructed (gender), represented (sexuality), expressed (culture), and regulated (social order)."³⁷⁹ Nonetheless, it is obligatory because it places the divine and human bodies conceptually in the same context (i.e., that of living within a state of oppression) and highlights the oppression of identity markers as the differences we all share that *makes a difference* to Christ. For my methodological purposes, it also unseats Christ from the human-made pedestal of the Western archetypal *imago Dei* constructed by centuries of patriarchy, sexism, homophobia, and elitism—the very forces that allow persecution of one group over another.

What is most interesting in Copeland's descriptions of the data of her subject matter (black women in American history) is that based on the data she gathers, she identifies patterns of experience of the victim and her oppressor. Yet, Copeland is not merely narrating or presenting accounts of their lives. She is seeking out specific operations of living in which Lonergan argues that our consciousness is constantly engaged, in particular the biological, aesthetic, dramatic, practical, intellectual, and religious patterns of experience.³⁸⁰ In

³⁷⁹ M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 56.

³⁸⁰ See Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 204-212.

pinpointing descriptive accounts of her subject matter in religious or everyday modes of living, she identifies and traces patterns of their operational consciousness, those that form their critical cognitive practice. She identifies their knowing through the empirical nature of these women's suffering and the exact point of where their suffering intersects with their deliberate efforts to overcome the oppression that causes it. Here is but one example from a fourteen-year old slave, Louisa Picquet, that describes an account of her dramatic and religious patterns of experience:

Mr. Williams told me what he bought me for, soon as we started for New Orleans. He said he was getting old, and when he saw me he thought he'd buy me and end his days with me. He said if I behave myself he'd treat me well: but, if not, he'd whip me almost to death... I thought it was of no use to be prayin', and livin' in sin... I begin then to pray that he might die so that I might get religion; and then I promise the Lord one night, faithful, in prayer, if he would just take him out of the way, I'd get religion and be true to Him as long as I lived.³⁸¹

Clearly, this young vulnerable woman, aware of her plight and its future, believed the only way to escape her life of persecution was through prayer to God, bartering her life for the cessation of her suffering and the life, however evil that life was, of her persecutor. By offering her 'sinful' body to God, *she* would be redeemed for the wrong she believed she had committed. This was her conscious act of resistance and the only way Louisa Picquet believed she could assume control of her tortured life. This would be the one way to re-define the value of her life so as, as she

³⁸¹ M. Shawn Copeland, "'Wading Through Many Sorrows', 140-141, quoting Bert James Loewenberg and Ruth Bogin (eds.), *Black Women in Nineteenth-Century American Life: Their Words, Their Thoughts, Their Feelings* (London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976) 58.

perceived it, to be worthy of God's favour and love. Copeland also recounts the historically conscious view of a group of enslaved black people:

[We] used to slip off in de woods on Sunday evening way down in de swamps to sing and pray to our own liking. We prayed for dis day of freedom. We come four and five miles to pray together to God dat if we don't live to see it, to please let our chillen live to see a better day and be free, so dat dey can give honest and fair service to de Lord and all mankind everywhere.³⁸²

While their experience as slaves could be perceived as full of despair, their personally understood horizon of meaning was not. Rather, these enslaved people were living the Christian promise of hope for an emancipated future, if not for themselves individually at that place and time, for the future of their children. In these two passages, which are examples that illustrate Copeland's use of historical data and primary source narrative, she not only locates and describes the experiences of black women in American history, but more significantly identifies their critical cognitive practice—their self-awareness, appropriated self-meaning, and decision-making capacity as active, not passive, agents. Without this step in marking their experience of suffering, Copeland could not delve as deeply as she does in qualifying *the meaning of their response to it*.

The distinct meaning of both their suffering and response can be discerned and precisely qualified by identifying their unique mindful approach to the will for self-transcendence within the life of their faith. Indeed, it seems to me that the question that Copeland asks when presenting and studying these narratives is not

³⁸² M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 43, quoting Norman Yetman (ed.), *Voices from Slavery* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970) 263.

“What is going on in this dialectic?” or “What is happening to these women?”—questions more commonly asserted in traditional feminist theological approaches to analysis—but rather “What are *they doing* when they are experiencing their lives?” Indeed, through the theme of suffering, Copeland shows the authenticity of their individual selves: that regardless of the horrific, evil actions perpetrated on them, they asserted their true agency precisely due to their critical self-consciousness, which speaks directly to their “self-understanding, self-judgment, and self-evaluation.”³⁸³

Also, by her own admittance, Copeland wants to avoid approaching the notion of experience as one that resides solely within the realm of sense experience, what Lonergan refers to as the “already-out-there-now-real”³⁸⁴ or the common practice of confronting what is ocularly seen and referred to as ‘reality’:

Critical feminist theologians must be wise in the apprehension and use of experience as a category of analysis. To confine difference [as experience] chiefly to the world of immediacy, i.e., the world of sensible experience, is to limit experience...and to render understanding of an ‘other’ and her experience impossible.³⁸⁵

She further explains that to do so is to accept the pornographic myth that critical knowing is taking a good look, whereas it is not.³⁸⁶ It is really, merely looking, viewing or observing.

³⁸³ M. Shawn Copeland, “‘Wading Through Many Sorrows’, 155.

³⁸⁴ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 263.

³⁸⁵ M. Shawn Copeland, “Difference as a Category”, in Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and M. Shawn Copeland, *Feminist Theology in Different Contexts* (London; Maryknoll, NY: SCM Press, 1996) 144.

³⁸⁶ Of course, the term ‘pornographic myth’ used by Copeland, is a direct reference to bell hooks who first coined the term in 1992, noting that white supremacist patriarchy created the pornographic

In identifying and accounting for the cognitive patterns of consciousness as explained by the oppressed agent, one avoids this pitfall and gains a fuller, more precise account of experience. What Copeland does so effectively in recounting the histories of black women's oppression is to analyze them using Lonergan's notion of the polymorphic character of consciousness. Again, she is doing so much more than retelling their history. She is highlighting their patterns of experience because of their suffering: the biological, aesthetic, artistic, dramatic, practical, intellectual, and mystical. In doing so, Copeland is able to determine how the subject appropriates existential meaning and value through the subject's reaction to her suffering within such modes of living. She rightly points out that "such specificity about experience might well aid in clarifying the analyses of contemporary theology as well as enhance those analyses and strengthen their conclusions."³⁸⁷

Copeland's approach in regard to the reality of suffering proves that while the horrific reality of American slavery restricted the effective freedom of black women, it did not restrict their essential freedom. As Lonergan wrote, "Man is free essentially inasmuch as possible courses of action are grasped by practical insight, motivated by reflection, and executed by decision."³⁸⁸ The treatment of the theme of suffering in Copeland's work exemplifies this statement very clearly.

myth of wild, black female sexuality. See bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992) 69.

³⁸⁷ M. Shawn Copeland, "Edging toward the Centre," *Lonergan Workshop* 20 (2008): 92.

³⁸⁸ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight* 619.

5.2.2. Theme II: Countering Racism and Catholic Social Teaching

While each contextual theology can be described as unique in terms of the goal of liberating a particular victimized group from oppression, Copeland approaches racial oppression in three specific ways: as a complex structural or systemic phenomenon, as a manifestation of Lonergan's notion of common sense thinking and acting (the general and group biases working together), and as a phenomenon that necessitates the transformation of human consciousness in order to overcome it.

Her goal in doing so in this manner is to delve deeply into the meaning of blackness or the "opaque symbol of blackness" in order to "uncover the light of divine revelation in that experience to honor the beauty of courage of black being."³⁸⁹ Whereas the experience of the suffering body is one source of her theology, her approach to the notion of race and its meaning is another: "In order to oppose racism, it is crucial to understand the continuing significance and shifting meaning of race."³⁹⁰

First, Copeland views racism (certainly in the American context) as complex, structured, and systemic throughout past and present society. As she notes, when racism is unchallenged, "the limited and limiting standpoint of skin as horizon reassures and is reassured in bias."³⁹¹ From her theological perspective,

³⁸⁹ M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom* 22.

³⁹⁰ M. Shawn Copeland, "The Critical Aesthetics of Race," in Laurie Cassidy and Maureen H. O'Connell (eds.), *She Who Imagines: Feminist Theological Aesthetics* (Collegeville, Liturgical Press: 2012) 74.

³⁹¹ M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom* 13.

institutionalized racism is not just manifested in bigotry that supports commonly sanctioned and legitimized processes of power in one's society. It seeks to undermine the very spirituality of those it oppresses, privileging the ruling oppressors' notion of who God is over who God wants to be within the existentially oppressed.

Copeland employs the very valuable work of sociologists Michael Omi and Howard Winant, whose scholarship focuses on the formation of race. Their theory of racial formation,³⁹² simply put, shows that concepts of race are created and transformed, and so they come to shape and permeate both identities and institutions, affecting every aspect of living. Furthermore, in contrast to other sociological theories of race, Omi and Winant convincingly argue that race is a constant in society, not a deviation from the 'norm'. As Copeland writes:

While this perspective grasps the brutality of racism on global and personal scales, it discredits any romanticization of race as essence as well as its misrepresentation as illusion...[R]ace is one concrete dimension of human representation...[T]he ability to read race accurately, to categorize people (black or white, red or brown) has become crucial for social behavior and comfort; the inability to identify accurately a person's race incites a crisis.³⁹³

Indeed, such a reaction based on this inability and confusion is a very common sense one where its basic meaning is located within Lonergan's realm of common sense meaning—a reaction that is driven by a physical sense, common, and a part

³⁹² Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

³⁹³ M. Shawn Copeland, "Racism and the Vocation of the Theologian", *Spiritus* 2:1 (Spring 2002): 17-18. As an example of race as illusion, she refers to the popular contemporary euphemism 'I'm colour-blind' to express one's disdain of racism, the notion that if one does not see colour and race, one discounts its history and presence.

of everyday living, where one's understanding of race is based more on opinion than informed theory. Copeland recounts a number of examples of such common sense behaviour of created racism such as when the "white students gasp audibly when the black professor enters the classroom on the first day" or the practice of 'racial lumping' as the inability to distinguish one racial-cultural group from another, which was particularly widespread in the immediate days following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.³⁹⁴ This behaviour is still evident in countries other than the United States, including Canada, France, Germany, and Italy.

Yes, this is driven partly by ignorance but, as Copeland argues, "white racist supremacy thrives in an atmosphere of biased common sense" that stifles "the realization of a common human good—that concrete, daily-lived expression of what being human means, as mediated through value-laden choices in which we, in our collaborations and relationships, constitute our society and take responsibility for our neighbors."³⁹⁵

While Copeland looks to Lonergan's notion of the human good as the standard for right human living, she also employs tenets from Catholic Social Teaching (CST) as resources that can promote resistance and engagement in the face of that which distorts concrete vital living and cultural expression. Specifically, she argues that CST can be an aid in promoting solidarity and communicating values in society that support all human flourishing. Being proactive in this regard means taking race and racism seriously by rejecting moral indifference and taking

³⁹⁴ M. Shawn Copeland, "Racism and the Vocation of the Theologian" 18-19.

³⁹⁵ M. Shawn Copeland, "Racism and the Vocation of the Theologian" 19, 20 respectively.

an active stand in response to the racism that permeates everyday living (e.g., countering racial epithets and humour).

She also notes that it means uncovering the Church's racialized history and biased teaching, which she has done in at least three notable examples of her work: a 2000 article in *Theological Studies* on the 500-year history of African American Catholicism in the United States and the examples of the Church's mistreatment of African Americans well into the twentieth century; the 2007 Madaleva lecture concerning Henriette Delille who, in confronting Catholic lay, religious, and clerics who engaged in slaveholding, founded the Sisters of the Holy Family in 1837; and finally in her 2010 book *Enfleshing Freedom*, in which Copeland contests the Church's official teaching on homosexuality. I highlight these three works because, as she notes, being serious about confronting racism and bias means taking a stance that is resolute, critical, and responsible, which "calls for the conscious and intentional appropriation of one's knowing and the orientation of that knowledge toward the achievement of authentic and moral human living."³⁹⁶ In the examples cited here, it seems to me that Copeland is carrying out that process on behalf of those in positions of power in the Church who are reluctant to do so. As she has remarked, "It is a loving thing to criticize one's own. We don't like it, but it is necessary."³⁹⁷

³⁹⁶ M. Shawn Copeland, "A Thinking Margin: The Womanist Movement as Critical Cognitive Praxis," in Stacy Floyd-Thomas (ed.), *Deeper Shades of Purple: Womanism in Religion and Society* (New York: New York University Press, 2006) 228.

³⁹⁷ In conversation with the author, June 19, 2014, Department of Theology, Boston College.

CST provides a standard for human living so that Catholics can open themselves to other cultures and peoples. Since CST is rooted in the notion of justice as equality and love of other, it provides a benchmark that ‘allows’ one to assume the risk of doing so, in overcoming the fears that prevent us from reaching out. Assuming that risk, as Copeland explains, necessarily brings about change in our interiority—the conversion that comes about from the “change in our attentiveness, in our questions, in our reflection, in our judgments, in our decisions, in our choices, in our living, in our loving.”³⁹⁸ She reminds us, in reference to Lonergan, that it is precisely because we stand in relation to a field of grace that our resistance to racism in is rooted in love.

5.2.3. Theme III: Solidarity and Performative Praxis

Copeland’s approach to the notion of solidarity is more precise, however, in large part, I believe, because she approaches dialectic through a Lonerganian lens. First and foremost, for Copeland, solidarity is praxis: it is active and outward. For it to be Christian solidarity, it is intersubjective as it resides in the distance between the Christian and Christ.

As she explains her vision of solidarity, “the cross of Christ exposes our pretense to historical and personal innocence, to social and personal neutrality. It uncovers the limitation of all human efforts and solutions to meet the problem of evil.”³⁹⁹ But what is interesting here is that Copeland reverses the outward action of solidarity—she does not begin with one’s compassionate and ethical actions of

³⁹⁸ M. Shawn Copeland, “The Critical Aesthetics of Race,” 85.

³⁹⁹ M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 99.

solidarity toward the 'other,' the distanced victim, but rather Christ's solidarity with the victim. She begins with divine solidarity that is already freely given to everyone: "...the praxis of solidarity is made possible by the loving self-donation of the crucified Christ, whose cross is its origin, standard, and judge...Clearly then, [Christ's] solidarity is no mere commonsense identification among members of the same group"⁴⁰⁰ as it does not discriminate; there is no room for humanly-defined exclusivity.

For us, it provides the standard by which to love, beginning with the intentional remembering of the despised of history, which necessitates the recognition of the exploited as they are (i.e., as God's own creation with their unique bodies, beings, and intersubjectivities). With this standard of love, authentic solidarity recognizes God's unique creation in each of us, and as an outward act of love it equates with an outward act of worship of Christ. This situates us in response to God's call for community love which is agape praxis.

Furthermore, Copeland offers a critical *how* of theological praxis in terms of feminist theologies, a pathway of sorts, in that authentic solidarity really can only be effective if it embraces our respective differences and not merely reflect our own defined horizons of comfortable living:

solidarity is crucial to the future of difference, the future of the interdependence of difference, indeed, to the future of humanity. Unlike coalitions, those transitory aggregates that conjoin solely to manipulate advantage, rather than change or transform structures of oppression, solidarity is less self-interested and less pragmatic...[S]olidarity insinuates cohesion, bonding and interdependence...[It] is a practice. It extends the ground on which we

⁴⁰⁰ M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 99.

may stand with other women (and children and men) who may be different in culture, history, religion, race, social class sexual orientation, but without whom we have no future. Solidarity is both the result and the cause of practically intelligent collaborations that bring about new mediations and through which we are made new.⁴⁰¹

Copeland also argues that solidarity is a “shouldering of responsibility” in struggles for justice, and includes all that we can do to end the marginalization of the oppressed. By accepting and acting on this responsibility, we are then accepting the obligation placed on us as Christians.⁴⁰² Echoing Lonergan, Copeland insists that humans can only be transformed through the Trinitarian character of the mystical Body of Christ in terms of the intersubjective connectedness of humans with God, of God with us, and between us. It is only through the mystical Body of Christ that salvation in human liberation is praxis that works beyond the limitations of social transformation toward “that absolute future that only God can give.” When she speaks of the force of love in this divine-human web of intersubjectivity, she places her discussion within Lonergan’s framework of the fivefold dynamics of love,⁴⁰³ all of which are animated by the Holy Spirit: God’s love for Christ, God’s love for Jesus as human being, Christ’s human love for us, God’s divine love for us, and, finally, the gift of charity as love.

Furthermore, Copeland stresses the role of the Eucharistic celebration, where solidarity means “the humble and complete orientation of ourselves before

⁴⁰¹ M. Shawn Copeland, “Difference as a Category”, 150.

⁴⁰² M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 100-101.

⁴⁰³ Bernard Lonergan, “The Mystical Body of Christ”, in Robert Croken, Robert Doran and Daniel Monsour (eds.), *Collective Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol. 20: Shorter Papers* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007) 106.

the lynched Jesus, whose shadow falls across the table of our sacramental meal.”⁴⁰⁴ In his raised body, a compassionate God interrupts the structures of death and sin, of violation and oppression. Solidarity, when seen through the lens of the Eucharist, reveals its interconnected divine-human nature, which invites and leads us to Lonergan’s three conversions (religious, cognitive, and moral). And as Copeland further explains, this approach to solidarity reveals to us that solely human efforts to counter oppression and transform society are not lasting ones.

When viewed within this framework of analysis, solidarity becomes much more than compassion for the faraway other, but an eschatological reality here and now *as our response to grace*, or what Lonergan referred to as “the divine solidarity in grace.”⁴⁰⁵ More specifically, Copeland qualifies solidarity in terms of its precise hermeneutic value. Rather than proceeding in theological analysis based on an assumed meaning of the term, Copeland’s hermeneutical framework here offers much more precision as to how solidarity takes actual shape and what values drive its meaning. Therefore, Copeland’s treatment of solidarity as a category of theological analysis, of being and acting in solidarity with *difference* and as a true reflection of the interconnected reality of God’s family, goes well beyond mere calls for moral compassion.

In summary to this section on the main themes of Copeland’s work, suffering, countering racism, and solidarity not only highlight her theological work but also act as key tools she uses in her contextual analysis. They reveal the

⁴⁰⁴ M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom* 126.

⁴⁰⁵ Bernard Lonergan, “Finality, Love and Marriage,” 27.

uniqueness of her subject matter and speak to the resources from Lonergan. In the section that follows, each of these themes will also serve to reveal how her methodology is distinctly her own and Lonerganian.

5.3. Copeland's Methodology and Use of Group and General Bias Analyses

Lonergan's empirical method underscores Copeland's theological analysis of bias against black women. Once again, GEM provides a means by which to locate the sources of meanings and values that comprise historical human living within their roots in consciousness. Through acute attentiveness to the data that our consciousness provides, we can do so through experiencing, inquiry, understanding, formulating, reflecting, verifying, judgment, and decision making: "GEM also explores the many ways these meanings and values are distorted, identifies the elements that contribute to recovery, and proposes a framework for collaboration among disciplines to overcome these distortions and promote better living together."⁴⁰⁶

Briefly, GEM looks to four distinct operations of consciousness in this overall process: being attentive to the data, being intelligent (reflective) with it, being reasonable (analytical), and being responsible (judging and acting responsibly based on the data). Lonergan also adds a fifth: be loving. And the fifth is critical, which we will see with Copeland's application of GEM.

Copeland employs these processes directly and deliberately in many of her works. This does not mean that it overrides or usurps her own analysis, as she

⁴⁰⁶ Tad Dunne, "Bernard Lonergan (1904—1984)" *Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, accessed February 15, 2017, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/lonergan/#H5> section 5, Methodology.

clearly works from a feminist theological perspective, but rather it frames her overall approach giving it implicit direction and focus beyond a more traditional and more commonly employed group-bias analysis. One could describe her methodology as comprising three distinct stages or progressive applications: a hermeneutic of suspicion, a hermeneutic of resistance, and a hermeneutic of critical realism. Copeland herself notes that Lonergan's empirical method provides a "bridging" between the concerns of liberation theologies and his notions of scotoma (bias) and the good of society.⁴⁰⁷ And, indeed, one can see this shoring directly between each step of her own method.

5.3.1. Hermeneutic of Suspicion

Copeland begins by placing racism squarely within Lonergan's heuristic framework of horizon and bias: "white supremacy thrives in an atmosphere of biased common sense...to the more or less conscious choice to be incorrect, to repress or refuse the surfacing of further or potentially correcting insights."⁴⁰⁸ A racialized horizon of knowing and living then, is one that is limited and stunted since it purposely remains within a carefully crafted world of privilege.

While it does not self-perceive it as such, racial privilege prevents the self-transcendence of its members. It renders the race (and skin) of the other shunned and invisible: "Skin morphs into a horizon funded by bias"—dramatic, individual, group, and common sense.⁴⁰⁹ Those who are rendered as unworthy due to their

⁴⁰⁷ In conversation with the author, June 19, 2014, Department of Theology, Boston College.

⁴⁰⁸ M. Shawn Copeland, "Racism and the Vocation of the Theologian", 18.

⁴⁰⁹ M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom* 13.

race are shunned by those who are conditioned to withdraw from intersubjectivity with them. The privileged, the oppressors, not only deprive themselves of self-transcendence, but also of the fruits of the self-transcendence of those they oppress.

This is precisely how Copeland views the interaction of the group and general biases in this context of racism. While the group bias of the racialized context becomes stratified throughout society, the general bias of common sense reinforces it by disregarding the insights and innovations that may come from those on the outside of privilege in favour of immediate sensory gratification induced by the power of privilege. The regulation of “social arrangements to the immediate well-being of the dominant racial group...thereby despoils the common good.”⁴¹⁰

For Copeland, a group-bias analysis is necessary and useful, yet insufficient on its own. She insists on the role that the general bias plays in our general support of the status quo:

The general bias of common sense trumpets practicality, but only in the short run. Our preoccupation with immediate desires or whims, quick-fix solutions or success allows us to tolerate the substitution of immaterial, unverified, and insufficient data for what is relevant, accurate, and sufficient. Long-term consequences stand too far on the distant horizon and we are not patient enough to continue questioning.⁴¹¹

⁴¹⁰ M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom* 14.

⁴¹¹ M. Shawn Copeland, “The Power of Difference: Understanding, Appreciating, Critiquing Difference,” 7.

Coupled with the other biases operative in society at the individual and group levels, Copeland writes that we become pliant to tolerance and thereby the meaning of identity and race continue to be controlled.

Copeland's theological anthropology provides the data for the inquiry of her hermeneutic of suspicion. As she explains, by paying careful attention not just to the experience of black women, but to their self-understanding and interpretation, judgment and evaluation of their own experience, "we may understand more adequately their determination to reclaim their bodies and those of their loved ones, and appreciate their love and struggle for freedom."⁴¹² In her analyses, she delves into the experiences of black female embodiment with such categories as blackness, being, body, incarnation, beauty, oppression as sin, suffering, and memory through such data as historical narrative and slave spirituals. While not an exhaustive list, her interpretation of the data of these categories as they reflect her subject uncover not just the experience and history of these women, but the divine light that has always been within them. This is perhaps the most important finding of her work. Again, Copeland not only asks the question of what happened to them—what was their historical experience — but perhaps more importantly, how did they respond? And when doing so, she also asks "What did *they know* when this was happening to them?"

Quite simply, she is consciously delving deeper into their own cognitive self-awareness, deeper than the exposition, description or symbolization of

⁴¹² M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 24.

experience⁴¹³ uncovered by a traditional group-bias analysis. She offers a potent example of this in the following excerpt of a Spiritual:

Inasmuch as the body is the medium through which human spirit incarnates and exercises freedom in time and space, enslaved women fleshed out the world of the Spiritual:

*Oh Freedom! Oh, Freedom! Oh Freedom, I love thee!
And before I'll be a slave, I'll be buried in my grave
And go home to my Lord and be free!*

Literally and metaphorically, black women reclaimed their bodies and the bodies of their loved ones from bondage. They defied the degradation of chattel slavery and refused to internalize a devaluation of self.⁴¹⁴

In this quotation, Copeland explains the self-perception of these slave women due to the condition of their enslaved bodies, which speaks beyond their historical condition and physical experience. The words of this spiritual speak to hope, to the freedom in eternal life with God, and love for him despite the misery caused by their oppression. Such analyses provide insights into their own cognitive state of awareness, revealing a much more significant meaning and value beyond the concrete impact of their oppressive existential state.

In her hermeneutic of suspicion, as with other feminist theologians, Copeland attends to the historical data of black women as proper to theological reflection. Yet, by applying Lonergan's fourfold GEM, she also attends to their "feelings and experiences, understanding and reflection, judgment and evaluation

⁴¹³ M. Shawn Copeland, "Lonergan on Black Theology: Panel Discussion", *Lonergan on the Edge Conference*, Marquette University, Sept. 22, 2012.

⁴¹⁴ M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 39.

about their situation,”⁴¹⁵ which enables her to identify their critical cognitive practice and reveal the dialectic between how they viewed themselves and their existential situation, and how they opposed it. She pursues this inquiry into her subject through Lonergan’s notion of self-appropriation:

Through self-appropriation on the cognitional level, the knower moves backward to discover herself as intelligent, as asking and answering questions, as having insights, as formulating and expressing concepts, as marshalling and weighing evidence, as passing judgments. What she reaches in self-appropriation is not some speculative knowing self, nor some abstract model of knowledge with its components verified in someone else’s understanding. Rather what she reaches is the personally affirmed and appropriated structure of her own knowing, i.e., her own experiencing, her own intelligent inquiry and insight, her own critical reflection and judging and deciding and acting.⁴¹⁶

Even Copeland’s use of the hermeneutic of suspicion, supported by Lonergan’s GEM and his notion of self-appropriation, reveals a much more nuanced state of the subject. It not only analyzes her socio-historical context, as does that of other feminist theologians, but it uncovers her own operations of consciousness and the role they play in her agency. It allows a much deeper reading of the subject, providing a truer picture of her plights.

5.3.2. Hermeneutic of Resistance

By locating the patterned operations of consciousness in the historical accounts of the suffering of black enslaved women, Copeland accounts for their

⁴¹⁵ M. Shawn Copeland, “‘Wading Through Many Sorrows’: Toward a Theology of Suffering in Womanist Perspective,” 138.

⁴¹⁶ M. Shawn Copeland, “Cognitional Theory as Epistemic Disobedience,” *15th Annual Lonergan Lecture*, The Lonergan Research Institute, Regis College, University of Toronto, October 21, 2016.

active agency in willfully transforming their victimization into Christian victory. In her analysis, she includes how these women “shaped and ‘fitted’ Christian practices, rituals and values to their own particular experiences, religio-cultural expectations and personal needs.”⁴¹⁷ Hence their unique understanding of the Christian religion became a source for their resistance as expressed in their religious spirituals:

Christian biblical revelation held out formidable power. It offered the slaves the ‘dangerous’ message of freedom, for indeed, Jesus did come to bring ‘freedom for the captive and release for those held in economic, social and political bondage’...In and through these moaned and sung utterances, one woman’s, one man’s suffering or shout of jubilation became that of a people...These songs told the mercy of God anew and testified to the ways in which the enslaved people met God at the whipping post, on the auction block in the hush arbor, in the midnight flight to freedom. The maker of the spiritual sang: “God dat lived in Moses’ time/Is jus’ de same today”...The slaves understood God as the author of freedom, of emancipation, certainly.⁴¹⁸

Thus, their understanding of God’s word and liberating message formed the patterned operations of consciousness needed in order to be active agents in resisting the crushing domination that permeated their lives. They viewed Jesus’ battered and broken body as their own. Their understanding of him as God gave their efforts at resistance meaning and value.

Language was indeed a form of powerful resistance. As Copeland shows, the struggle of black women in resistance proves they had the choice, the

⁴¹⁷ M. Shawn Copeland, “‘Wading Through Many Sorrows’: Toward a Theology of Suffering in Womanist Perspective,” 149.

⁴¹⁸ M. Shawn Copeland, “‘Wading Through Many Sorrows’: Toward a Theology of Suffering in Womanist Perspective,” 150.

determination, and the power to act with intelligence, ingenuity, and strength. For those who resisted the violence of their daily lives with song, prayer, sass, psychological strength, and even escape, they did so with the prevailing hope in God's promises: "Theologically considered, black women's absolute enfleshment of freedom, sown in the *there-and-then*, is caught up and realized in the abiding presence of the resurrected body of Jesus."⁴¹⁹ The existential meaning of the suffering of their lives was transposed through their ongoing efforts to resist suffering and overcome it through their abiding faith in God. Two examples offered by Copeland underscore this point.

First, in recounting the sexual advances endured by the black slave Harriet Jacobs and her psychological, verbal, and physical resistance to it, as well as her eventual escape, Copeland notes that the spiritual and existential agony caused by this violence tainted her self-esteem and shadowed the rest of her life. Jacobs, in enacting revenge on her master, decides to have an affair with a white, unmarried man. By doing so, she believed that she would gain some semblance of freedom from her owner. Given the context of her situation, she felt her resistance to her master in this way would be freeing. Rather, afterward, she felt intense shame in giving up her virginity for such a purpose.

The significance of the notion of female virginity carried much weight with women of this time, not unlike the Catholic teaching of virginity today. Yet, Copeland's analysis of this woman's experience transposes the meaning of

⁴¹⁹ M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 4.

virginity that Jacobs understood in her historical socio-cultural context: Copeland argues that theological analysis should provide comfort to the memory of Harriet Jacobs and she asks, “Does not the sacrifice of her virgin body shield and preserve the virginity of her spirit and her heart? And, of what importance is a virgin body if the spirit and heart are violated, raped, crushed?”⁴²⁰ Thus, Copeland re-situates the meaning of virginity to a more theologically significant one in analyzing the account of Jacob’s resistance to her existential situation.

A second example of this approach is found in *Enfleshing Freedom*. Copeland includes a description and critique of the Church’s teaching on homosexual orientation and activity.⁴²¹ She begins with the question “Can Jesus of Nazareth be an option for gays and lesbians?” one that many Catholic LGBTQ persons ask. She then continues with the assertion that if Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God, cannot be an option for all people regardless of their sexuality, then he cannot be an option.⁴²² Copeland carries out her critique of the Church’s stance on queer persons by relating Jesus’ body to our own as she employs a

⁴²⁰ M. Shawn Copeland, “‘Wading Through Many Sorrows’: Toward a Theology of Suffering in Womanist Perspective,” 157-158.

⁴²¹ The Roman Catholic Church spells out its teaching on specifically homosexual ‘orientation’ in two main documents: *Homosexualitatis problema*, “Letter to All Catholic Bishops on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons,” [1/11/1986] http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19861001_homosexual-persons_en.html, April 15, 2017, and *Persona Humana*, “Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics,” Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith [12/29/1975] http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19751229_persona-humana_en.html, April 15, 2017. Note that Church teaching does not use inclusive, widely accepted terms such as LGBTQ or the umbrella term ‘queer’ but rather almost exclusively the term ‘homosexual’ when referring to sexuality, sexual behaviour and sexual identity that is not heterosexual.

⁴²² M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 77-78.

hermeneutic of queer theology. In so doing, she takes seriously the spiritual impoverishment of queer persons in response to such teaching.

Yes, this is a form of critical theory, but in itself, it is also a form of her own theological hermeneutic of resistance. She admits that the words queer and Christ in the same sentence may be obscene and shocking to some, and admittedly she is not claiming that Jesus was queer. But she is deliberately re-situating a long-held notion of the Catholic Church as to what it considers to be right human living, one that does not include full, open, authentic queer living: “Just as the black Christ [also shocking to some] heals the anthropological impoverishment of black bodies, so too a ‘queer’ Christ heals the anthropological impoverishment of homosexual bodies.”⁴²³

She then places Christ and us, all of us, at God’s welcoming table. But if we can only come to the banquet, including the Eucharistic banquet, by fulfilling conditions that are imposed and shape our existence, such as those taught by the Church about the intrinsic disorderliness of homosexual activity, are we truly welcome at the table? In effect, what Copeland is really arguing is that the meaning and value of this teaching is morally ambivalent and contradictory. She writes, “if the risen Christ cannot identify with gay and lesbian people, then the gospel announces no good news and the reign of God presents no real alternative to the ‘reign of sin.’”⁴²⁴ This has significant implications for any theological solution to evil.

⁴²³ M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 78.

⁴²⁴ M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 78.

God's love is not conditional; God embraces all of our bodies as they are, as God intended them.

As Copeland explains, for many queer persons who are drawn by God's passionate love, adhering to Church teaching in this regard relegates them to the periphery of the ecclesial body. It renders them celibate and invisible, whose resistance in this sense often means leaving the Church or at the very least, living a double life. Through her theological anthropology, Copeland reveals the distorted meaning of this teaching and revisions and repositions it in the face of God's inclusive love, releasing "bodily desire from the tomb of fear and loathing."⁴²⁵ This speaks to the dialectic of all human existence: aligning who we are with who we want to be in the face of the constraints of the culture in which we live. But what Copeland effectively does in this case, is re-align the meaning of who we are and who we want to be in a personal authenticity that is grounded in self-transcendence.

5.3.3. Hermeneutic of Critical Realism

Through the first two hermeneutical stages of Copeland's methodology, she comes to re-evaluate and reinterpret the distorted virtues and values present in the oppressive context. And she insists that this re-evaluating and re-interpreting be rooted in a framework of critical realism. As stated earlier in this study and reiterated by Copeland, Lonergan asserts that the purpose of theology is to mediate

⁴²⁵ M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 81.

between any given culture and the role of religion in that culture. This assertion characterizes Copeland's method.

Without an approach that hinges on critical realism, one is left with an incomplete picture, fraught with ambiguity. With a critical realist approach, Copeland admittedly wants to avoid two traps: naïve realism and idealism. She writes,

Chattel slavery disclosed the impoverished idealism that vitiated the Gospels, left Christianity a mere shell of principles and ideas, and obviated the moral and ethical implications of slavery—for master and slave alike. Likewise, a naïve biblicism is impossible: 'the Bible has been the most consistent and effective book that those in power have used to restrict and censure the behavior of African American women.'⁴²⁶

Critical realism also eschews rigid classicist notions of what constitutes human identity and agency since it seeks to uncover not only the twisted values that drive oppression, even those supported by a distorted misuse of Christian virtues and principles, but the truth of the human experience at hand.

Copeland also employs the notion of epistemic disobedience in her theological method, whereby the theologian consciously 'de-links' their thinking and outlook from "Eurocentrism as a hegemonic structure of knowledge and beliefs" that arose out of classicism, for such de-linking "interrogates, problematizes, contests the residue of colonial histories, structural or institutional, and intersubjective relations as these break into the contemporary" in order to make the

⁴²⁶ M. Shawn Copeland, "Wading through the Many Sorrows," 154. Copeland quotes Renita J. Weems, "Reading Her Way through the Struggle: African-American Women and the Bible," in Cain Hope Felder (ed.), *Story the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation* (Minneapolis: MD: Fortress, 1991) 63.

difference of the other visible.⁴²⁷ This tool also serves to support Lonergan's cognitional theory, which is clearly evident in Copeland's work. As such, it invites the theologian to uncover the beauty and experience of difference within history that is purposely and arrogantly covered up by domination and colonialism.

The use of this kind of methodical tool reflects Lonergan's discussion on dialectic in *Method*, noting that objective knowledge is not to be found only by seeing and observing an object. Nor is it to be found in naïve realism, naïve idealism, empiricism, critical idealism, and absolute idealism because they are all underscored by ambiguity. Yet,

Once those ambiguities are removed, once an adequate self-appropriation is effected, once one distinguishes between object and objectivity in the world of immediacy and, on the other hand, object and objectivity in the world mediated by meaning and motivated by value, then a totally different context arises. For it is now apparent that in the world mediated by meaning and motivated by value, objectivity is simply the consequence of authentic subjectivity, of genuine attention, genuine intelligence, genuine reasonableness, genuine responsibility.⁴²⁸

Therefore, in applying the process of GEM in the first two hermeneutical stages of her own method, Copeland effectively removes any ambiguities surrounding the moral agency of her human subjects. By revealing the values held by black slave women, as evident in their critical cognitive practice, the meaning of their own virtues and indeed self-worth are revealed: "As a mode of critical self-consciousness, black women's cognitive practice emphasizes the dialectic

⁴²⁷ M. Shawn Copeland, "Cognitional Theory as Epistemic Disobedience." *15th Annual Lonergan Lecture*, The Lonergan Research Institute, Regis College, University of Toronto, October 21, 2016.

⁴²⁸ Bernard Lonergan, *Method*, 265.

between oppression, conscious reflection on the experience of that oppression, and activism to resist and change it.”⁴²⁹

It seems to me that what is most interesting in this approach is that while Copeland consciously applies Lonergan’s discussion of GEM in much of her work, she uncovers how her subjects carried out the very same processes.

Authentic incarnations of black identity (neither imitative nor emulative) emerge in response to ‘the law of genuineness’ in human development ... Thus, living by this law means that the black human subject takes herself, her humanity, seriously and responsibly: she engages in critical question of her own initiatives [be attentive], acknowledges the tension between potential and actualization [be intelligent], responds to new spontaneities with new habits and patterns [be reasonable], revises choices and values, and seeks a new way of being in the world [be responsible].⁴³⁰

Copeland identifies these four operations of consciousness employed by her subject matter primarily through the data of historical narrative in order to determine the values of the subject’s existential living and their everyday, intellectual, and religious meanings.

Thus far, I have attempted to show the framework and tools that Copeland employs in her womanist theology of suffering. She begins with a hermeneutic of suspicion—a framework for analysis employed by most feminist theologians—and continues with a hermeneutic of resistance that uncovers the meanings and values transposed by her subjects into those that empower them to be active agents. Both stages are undergirded by Lonergan’s notions of bias and his cognitive theory,

⁴²⁹ M. Shawn Copeland, “Wading through the Many Sorrows,” 155.

⁴³⁰ M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 21-22.

which forms the foundation of GEM. Yet, unlike a group-bias analysis, which often points to a human solution, Copeland's solution to oppression is entirely and appropriately theological: "Our ultimate commitment [as theologians] can never be to any system or structure, person or group, Church or university, but only to the God of Jesus Christ. His prophetic praxis, in the face of certain death, demonstrates the risk and meaning of a life lived in prayerful hope."⁴³¹ Thus, Copeland concludes that authentic theology is impossible without living one's faith. For her, the praxis of theology begins with the theologian, not the subject's oppressive context, and that praxis must be grounded in prayer as a "reach and a risk into the Unknown" of our Christian faith. Echoing Lonergan, she writes that it leads us as theologians toward ultimate meaning and value:

It is a passionate launch into a lifelong journey of discovery—of the Divine, of self, of the only future worth hoping for and worth having. In prayer, we seek and find the One whose love redeem us, whose sacrifice of life gives back to us our own. It is for the glory of the crucified Jesus that we shoulder our study, research, and writing...Prayer is no substitute for theology, the disciplined, critical reflection on ultimate meaning and value. But without prayer, theology is emptied of passion, of hope.⁴³²

She views prayer as not only communication with God in silence and reflection, but as a mode of living and divine-human love. While this may seem an obvious element for the work of any Christian theologian, for Copeland it is necessary since it leads us to the solution of bias as sin. As a mode of being, prayer leads us away

⁴³¹ M. Shawn Copeland, "Racism and the Vocation of the Christian Theologian," 26.

⁴³² M. Shawn Copeland, "Racism and the Vocation of the Christian Theologian," 26.

from bias to the self-sacrificial love of God, in order to effectuate the solidarity and transformation of ourselves, among us.

It is this reorientation, rooted in God's love for us, that redirects us away from human solutions to sin and injustice, to theologically "elucidate a new and redemptive solidarity in the transforming reality that is Christ."⁴³³ It is the healing of the social surd of sin and creation of a more just world through God's gift of grace. This speaks directly to what her analysis of black women's subjugation reveals: the solutions to their oppression (the cognitive and existential discovery of God's true virtue of hope, redemption and love) could only be found in their living relationship with God—in which active vengeance against the slave master had no place "as they did not allow sorrow to yield to revenge."⁴³⁴ Copeland continues: "The history of human suffering and oppression, of failure and progress, are transformed only in light of the supernatural."⁴³⁵

5.3.4 Conclusion

Copeland's threefold method of inquiry (hermeneutic of suspicion, hermeneutic of resistance, and critical realism), informed by Lonergan's GEM, allows her to analyse her subject's actual process of self-transcendence, which she then illuminates with the light of faith. Precisely because Copeland does not limit herself to a more traditional group bias analysis, and because she recognizes the

⁴³³ M. Shawn Copeland, "Racism and the Vocation of the Christian Theologian" 27.

⁴³⁴ M. Shawn Copeland, "Blackness Past, Blackness Future" 637.

⁴³⁵ M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 102.

existence of the general bias of common sense, she is able to qualify the limitations of justice-based solutions to oppression.

Since she looks to identify how her subject (black enslaved women) carry out those processes of experiencing, imagining, inquiring, understanding, judging, valuing, choosing, and loving, her analysis reveals how her subjects appropriate meaning and value within their oppressive context. As she notes, by only analyzing the subject's context 'ocularly' (through direct observation or perception of data), one is really only viewing its immediacy and the sense experience of the subject. Yet because the subject's conscious is polymorphic in nature, her experience reflects an authentic reality far deeper than can be revealed by a critique that stems from the basic facts of subject's historical disposition. Yes, this is a subtle difference in critical approach, but a significant one that accounts for the difference in theological solutions born from Copeland's analysis and that of many other liberation theologians.

Chapter 6. Value of a Lonerganian Approach to the Problem of Human Oppression

6.1. The Objectives of This Chapter

This chapter stands as a compilation of my research for this project, the primary objectives of which are twofold. First, I wish to elaborate how Lonergan's broader theory-interiority heuristic framework (explained in the third and fourth chapters) reveals the limitations of a contextual analysis that is more traditionally focused on the group bias. In this section I will engage with my interlocutors from the second chapter.

Second, I will highlight the benefits to be gained from an analysis that identifies Lonergan's general bias as well as a group bias, and proceed with a contextual analysis based on these two biases. In this section I will emphasize how Copeland's work, with her application of specific tools from Lonergan, provides a deeper, more precise analysis of the subject, the results of which point to a different and perhaps more profound way of understanding the theological component of the solution to oppression than traditionally offered by a group-bias analysis. Thus, the overall aim of this chapter is to explain how a general bias analysis, in addition to a group-bias analysis, corrects some of the limitations in and helps advance the project of more traditional feminist theologies that primarily employ a group-bias approach. It is my contention that such a deeper analysis in this regard, with these hermeneutical tools from Lonergan, yields a more fully theological grace-based solution to gender oppression *in addition* to the short-term,

albeit important and necessary, justice-based solutions. Furthermore, such grace-based solutions arise due to the data that are revealed in a deeper, more precise analysis, which also re-situates the problem of oppression within a broader historical and theological heuristic framework of meaning.

The remainder of this chapter is organized as follows:

First, I will pinpoint those aspects of Lonergan's notion of the general bias that I deem to be essential to further the critical theory approaches of my three feminist interlocutors. This will be drawn from the third and fourth chapters.

Second, I will provide a point-by-point account of how Copeland's methodological approach to gender oppression includes a more traditional group-bias analysis of her contextual subject, but with key tools derived from Lonergan, moves beyond the limitations of a traditional feminist group-bias analysis and thereby reveals a deeper and more precise meaning of both the problem and, I argue, a more theological solution that includes but is not limited to justice-based appeals.

I conclude this chapter with a commentary on the notion of *ressentiment* and (a) its potential to divert the victim from the process of healing and reconciliation, and (b) the danger that it presents to the theologian. I will follow up with a few suggestions for further research that may also prove to benefit the methodologies of feminist theologies.

6.2. Lonergan's Broader Theory-interiority Heuristic Framework and the Limitations of a Contextual Group-Bias Analysis, Highlighting the Work of Ross, Farley, and Cahill

As previously stated, the theologian who approaches a critical dialectics of oppression attempts to analyze the impact of the oppressive actions on the agents therein, with the goal of articulating how the agency of the victim in particular can be expanded to freedom from restriction and restraint, that which impeded her full human and spiritual flourishing. Insofar as the context and its agents (the oppressor and the oppressed) are objectified, the theologian also assesses the historical facts of the context, but does not necessarily objectify himself or herself in the process.

In this manner, the contextual theologian attempts to maintain scientific objectivity in the process of critical analysis. This reflects the approach of critical theory in general throughout the twentieth century from the standpoint of a bipolar dialectic; the two players can be described as oppressor and oppressed.

Upon careful and methodological analysis, the theologian then makes value judgments based on the perceived facts of the context. Human development itself is generally viewed as the working toward or achieving a state of justice for the victim following the removal or dismantling of the power of the oppressor. Throughout this process of analysis, the phenomenon of cognitive bias is treated as a given aspect of human nature and living. The focus of the theologian remains on the contextual problem at hand—that of the existence of the oppressive state, its effects on the victims, and the means by which to emancipate the oppressed. In

sum, the bias is real, it is manifested, it harms, and it must be prevented from effectuating further harm.

Drawing on Lonergan, I would describe this overall approach as limiting on three counts. First, it does not recognize the polymorphous nature of bias, which manifests as four separate types of scotoma on the cognitive level of human consciousness, not merely one. Second, it does not reflect a serious analysis of the role and effects of the general bias of common sense. This carries profound implications for feminist theologians in terms of methodology and theological solutions to oppression. By recognizing the existence and consequences of the general bias of common sense, one's critical approach to the notions of subject agency and justice changes, as well as God's theological response to injustice. Finally, a group-bias analysis does not recognize the longer cycle of decline that comes about with interaction of the group and general biases. Let me explain this point with specific references to the work of Farley, Ross and Cahill.

Because my interlocutors adhere to the traditional group-bias analysis of women's oppression and do not recognize the existence of the general bias of common sense, they do not extrapolate its implications of the context of oppression. Accordingly, their understanding of the notion of justice reflects the necessity of removing that which restricts the agent's freedom, that which is imposed by the oppressor. This appears logical and I agree that the oppressive forces that restrict a woman's agency should be eliminated, for example, structural or systemic patriarchy, or more specifically, the refusal to permit women into leadership positions in the Catholic Church.

But I want to remind the reader of Lonergan's two notions of human freedom with respect to agency: essential and effective. Without exception, all human beings have the capacity for essential freedom: "Man (sic) is free essentially inasmuch as possible courses of action are grasped by practical insight, motivated by reflection, and executed by decision."⁴³⁶ This is the freedom to experience, to understand, to question, to judge significance and worth, and to make decisions based on each of those conscious operations. In this sense, each person has the freedom to decide how to approach life. On the other hand, the effective freedom of human agency is what is analyzed in a traditional group-bias analysis—the actual limits placed on us by our specific human condition, including those limits imposed by our life circumstances, for example, oppressive circumstances.

Again, within that group-bias analysis, justice is that which is perceived to be gained when the limits of life circumstances, such as oppressive forces, are removed. The theological implications of this kind of justice, within a group-bias framework, remain within the purview of human agency, such as structural change or the removal of the oppressive forces (which is still necessary).

Yet, note the implications if we adopt Lonergan's two-pronged approach to human freedom: that full human agency also has to do with the possibility of self-determination *despite* the reality of an oppressive state imposed on a person. When human agency is viewed as encompassing both kinds of freedom, the expansion of agency, even within an oppressive context does not rely solely on the

⁴³⁶ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 619.

removal of the oppressor. Rather, the agency of and justice for the victim take on new, enlarged meaning.

A general bias analysis, along with its theological response, moves analysis beyond a group bias approach to justice because it allows the theologian to realize that a state of just living, what we want just justice to be, cannot be fully achieved through human will and effort alone. The general bias of common sense, always operative and common to all, is simply too potent and prevailing, far worse than the group bias. Moreover, full recognition of the general bias, and its exacerbation of the effects of the group bias, allows the theologian to realize a more theological solution to the problem of injustice, in that the solution is already underway through God's active grace-based agency which effectively continues in human historicity. Thus, a general bias analysis, coupled with the more traditional group-bias analysis of oppression, reveals that full human agency does not come solely or even primarily through the change of oppressive social structures because an oppressive state (regardless of the extent of its horror) does not completely restrict full victim agency. Copeland's work very effectively illustrates this.

Furthermore, when the theologian makes the full turn to interiority at the third stage of meaning, one is then able to make a methodological shift in the scope of analytical ability precisely because the process of traversing interiority requires self-critical exploration of personal biases, including the identification of one's own general bias of common sense. This process positions the theologian to explore precisely how bias operates in human agency and how it affects the

approaches we impose on our own work and, just as importantly, our critical approaches to the work of others, including those with whom we disagree.

In sum, while theoretical controls to the approach of value and meaning from Lonergan's second realm of meaning (theory) are employed in theological contextual analysis (e.g., the three-pronged hermeneutical activities of critique of tradition, recovery of agency, and reconstruction within feminist analysis), if the analyst has not achieved a sufficient level of self-appropriation from the process of interiority within the third realm of meaning, the questions driving that analysis will be prompted by operations of consciousness that reflect the first two realms of meaning.

A mixture of common sense and theory based questions do not seek to determine more comprehensive values and meanings already operative for the agents within the objectified context, including those of the oppressor and the victim. Furthermore, without the recognition of the existence of the general bias as operative in the objectified context, bias remains as a phenomenological given of a singular type. Questions that seek its polymorphic nature are not pursued since they are not identified, and dialectic is accepted by the analyst as a bipolar phenomenon. For the contextual theologian, the polymorphic nature of the consciousness of the dialectic's agents remain hidden and are not pursued for analysis. Moreover, the possibility and extent of one's own biases, most especially the general bias of common sense, is not identified—analytical operations from a widely accepted and tested theoretical hermeneutic do not warrant self-

questioning, particularly if they appeal to logic and accepted scientific method that calls for the objectivity of the analytical scientist.

Now let me relate the overall work of my interlocutors to this framework. Each begins from the theological premise that sexism is contrary to God's intent for men and women, regardless of one's sexuality or the point at which one self-identifies on the spectrum of gender identification. Each looks to the experience of women as a key source of data and this reveals a properly empirical approach based on the various modes of engaging in human experience. Each applies a noted theological methodology in order to critique the dialectic of patriarchal forces that limit women's agency.

In doing so, each seeks to interpret the intelligibility of faith as the lens through which women's flourishing should be measured. Each seeks to interpret the intelligibility and accountability of the Christian faith throughout a particular feminist methodological lens. Each seeks to retrieve key elements of the Catholic tradition which support the full physical and spiritual agency of women. And finally, each looks to specific solutions in response to patriarchy that support the full spiritual flourishing of women—all of which appeal in some regard to the notion of justice as they understand it.

Susan Ross' work can be described as a feminist sacramental theology. She focuses on women's lived experience in terms of the sacraments and liturgy, with a particular emphasis on the experience of beauty, arguing that while women are still excluded from Catholic sacramental leadership, they still carry out sacramental ministry at many levels of their lives beyond the walls of the Church.

She argues that appropriated meaning, even within sacramental experience, is not fixed and she eschews a classicist approach to gender as dualistic and biological in its very nature and basis.

Her key sources of data are women's experiences, particularly their wide-ranging practices of beauty, which Ross presents as a window or doorway to the goodness of God, through what she calls creative engagement. Although she acknowledges the constitutive existence of patriarchy, she does not analyze its root causes. However, she does argue that the phenomenon of evil action is a choice by those who perpetrate it, and exists as an absence of God. With this overall approach to women's agency, Ross very effectively mediates the goals of feminist theology with the questions that many of us struggle with at this point in history, navigating the space between questions of human being in the world with the answers provided by our Christian faith, including questions of postmodern feminism, sexuality, and the manifestation of evil.

Ross very effectively draws on the work of social scientists and other theologians, including feminist theologians. A methodological advantage of her work in this regard is that her data concerning women's experience are supported by other advanced scholarship and feminist theory overall. I would argue that one of the most compelling and valuable facets of her unique approach is her search for the aesthetic value and experience of divine beauty in the lives of her subjects, including those of other socio-cultural contexts vastly different from her own.

This approach values the unlimited nature and potential of aesthetic experience not merely as it is experienced by women, but also situates these

subjects as open to divine transcendence through what Lonergan would call the aesthetic and artistic modes of living. This clearly allows Ross an avenue for deeper analysis of her subjects *and* the unlimited nature of sacramental experience as adapted by women through their creativity and approach to beauty.

Yet while Ross explores the unlimited nature of sacramental beauty, the basis of her response to Church patriarchy is the call to the reform of Church structure with an “openness to new developments, continuing reflection on women’s experience, and a careful scrutiny of our symbolic heritage [that] will work to transform the ways in which we live out the Christian belief that Christ lives among us in the flesh and blood of the Church.”⁴³⁷ Thus, Ross argues that one way the Church can transform itself out of its patriarchal practices is for women and men to continue to re-envision its symbolic practices.

Ross’ theological methodology provides for a deep analysis of how women creatively appropriate meaning from sacramental experience. Ross explores how they creatively form a new understanding of sacramental authenticity that in no way diminishes the sacredness of the experience despite “the structural and theological obstacles [the Christian Church] has placed in the way of the full equality of women and men.”⁴³⁸

For Ross, women’s agency in the Church is impeded by rules and organizational structure such as magisterial doctrine, the Code of Canon Law, and

⁴³⁷ Susan Ross, “God’s Embodiment of Women,” 207.

⁴³⁸ Susan Ross, *Extravagant Affections*, 63.

practices based on two millennia of tradition. Furthermore, Ross does not differentiate bias as ontologically anything other than one kind of thinking—that which is manifested in the group bias. Justice, then, remains that which can come about through structural change and reform. As such, her analysis does not allow for a re-appropriation or an expansion of the notion of justice that identifies God's grace already creatively working in these women, perhaps as that which is constituted as the creative adaptation of their sacramental experience.

As a Christian ethicist and feminist, Margaret Farley's theology gives methodological priority to women's distinctive moral and religious experience. It is an *engendered* theology that takes seriously feminist consciousness in critiquing Christian tradition and what have always been presumed to be normative notions of what constitutes women's nature. She has been described as a feminist pioneer who

has stretched the content of theological ethics, bringing to the center concerns often overlooked or trivialized: the role of equality and mutuality in a theology of sexuality and marriage; the ethical and theological dimensions of commitment; the adequacy of normative accounts of 'nature' and 'the natural'; domestic violence; the abuse of authority by religious leaders; and the disproportionate vulnerability of women globally to the threat of AIDS.⁴³⁹

Unlike many other feminist theologians who are clearly suspicious of attempts to ascribe universals to women, Farley begins her theological analysis from the argument that there are experiences common to all people in all times

⁴³⁹ Maura Ryan, in Maura Ryan and Brian Linnane (eds.), *A Just and True Love — Feminism at the Frontiers of Theological Ethics: Essays in Honor of Margaret A. Farley* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007) 1.

(e.g., loving and suffering), that are true and reveal our authentic relationality with God. In this sense, human experience has the potential for transcendence in communion with God, what I have previously called *relational grace*. While the notions of commitment and God's self-revealing love for us are key themes in Farley's work, so is the notion of what it means to love justly, based on the necessary elements of autonomy and relationality.

Her theological approach to justice allows her to move beyond calls for compassion and solidarity with those who are oppressed, since she insists that a just love, at any level of society, must include respect for the morally significant differences among its members, including sexuality, race, religious belief, and gender identification. As such, she sees love and compassion as tools to bring about justice, as tools to critique and counter those actions and structures in society that do not respect self-determination in relationships, in one's health and spiritual flourishing. Farley has long argued that justice in any relationship, even that of the interrelationality of members of Christ's family, must be based on equality, mutuality and reciprocity.⁴⁴⁰

This is her benchmark against which justice must be theologically measured and that directly reflects the Christian Trinity. As Lisa Sowle Cahill notes, Farley clearly uses resources from Aquinas in order to ground her contemporary interpretation of human freedom and the role it plays in relationship and

⁴⁴⁰ Margaret Farley, "New Patterns of Relationship," *Theological Studies* 36:4 (1975) 645.

commitment.⁴⁴¹ Interestingly, Cahill also makes the link between Farley's understanding of personal freedom and Lonergan's notion of the cognitional structure of freedom and his argument that all human beings have an intrinsic orientation toward God.

Yet, Farley's notion of existential freedom, even to love freely, is based on the absence of unjust restraints on one's being. Farley argues that if we cannot love freely (in the sense of freely choosing the object of our love) and in an unencumbered manner those things and people that hold sacred meaning in our lives (including God), we simply cannot transcend to the right, the good, and the true in our overall existence as well as our relationships. Thus, while Farley values the notion of self-transcendence and the unlimited potential of love and compassion as tools to bring about just living, her notion of justice is directly linked to the extent of one's effective freedom in relation to group bias: "The self-transcendence that Christians associate with what it means to be a human person pertains to ourselves not just as spirits but as bodies."⁴⁴² And as she argues, a key part of our embodied and spirited self is our sexuality, which cannot and should not be defined prescriptively given the existence of intersexuality, homosexuality, heterosexuality, and transgenderism.

In sum, Farley is a feminist theologian who has devised an exceptionally valuable theological model that effectively addresses unjust living. However, part of

⁴⁴¹ Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Feminist Theology and Sexual Ethics", in Maura Ryan and Brian Linnane (eds.), *A Just and True Love — Feminism at the Frontiers of Theological Ethics: Essays in Honor of Margaret A. Farley* 25.

⁴⁴² Margaret Farley, *Just Love*, 117-118.

her criteria for just living, as she has envisioned in her model of just love, still rests on opposing oppression imposed structurally on women, as in the case of an overly strong centralized teaching authority of the Church that actively favours the silencing of alternative voices, hence, her call for public arenas and structures where all voices on moral matters can be heard.

While her model of just love signifies the theological relevance and value of the act of loving over the act of deconstructing, her analysis of bias is still based on a traditional group-bias analysis of oppression against women. Also, she does not differentiate bias at its cognitive root, as Lonergan does.

As an accomplished and noted Catholic feminist theologian, Lisa Sowle Cahill's approach to justice and just living reflects a balanced ethics that carefully blends traditional Catholic notions of natural law with a historically conscious feminist approach to postmodern gender and sexual critical theory. Her grounding in the importance of the Thomistic notion of human spiritual flourishing and her insistence that truth and values can be located in common, shared experiences (regardless of one's culture, language, and time) is much more than a nod to Aquinas' foothold within the Catholic moral tradition. Rather, she effectively argues that through the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition our shared values can be retrieved in order to help us rise above our current state of cultural relativism in the West. She notes that such shared values continue to endure-- for example, respect, empathy, reciprocity and fidelity--precisely those that are required to direct a positive and healthy ethics of sex and gender.

Furthermore, she insists on the role of the theologian her/himself as intrinsic to effective theological praxis:

Theology is systematic, intellectual reflection on the experience of salvation; to be adequate to that experience, theology must incorporate and foster salvation's relational and social dimensions. To the extent that theological concepts foster historical injustice, they are inauthentic and false to the experience of salvation in Jesus Christ.⁴⁴³

Thus, one must live what one reasons.

As a Catholic ethicist, Cahill does not limit her theology to her own moral reasoning within a Catholic or Christian context, but incorporates the thought of others from a range of thinkers beyond Catholic theology including philosophy, sociology, and psychology, just to name a few. In addition to Aquinas, of course, she often cites David Tracy and Charles Taylor. Thus, she highly values the intersection of theology and other human sciences.

While Cahill does not develop a detailed analysis of oppressive behaviours and institutionalized bias (such as patriarchy), she does not discount their effects. In this vein, she accepts such actions as evil or sinful as a human phenomenon that continue in history. But she is open to a broader notion of justice, one that does not rely solely on structural reform or the removal of the oppressor, but one that includes the transcendence of the victim and the oppressor. She notes that the cross is often characterized as a historical fact of Jesus' life and vocation rather than a divine necessity, yet we cannot sidestep the Christological fact that

⁴⁴³ Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Global Justice, Christology and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2013) 2-3.

salvation, through and because of Christ's crucifixion, is not just for those victims of injustice:

Many also explain cross-centered Christian piety by interpreting the cross as a symbol of God's solidarity with the innocent victims of injustice. These strategies are valid in themselves. But are they adequate? One problem is that they fail to account for the role of the cross in the conversion and transformation of sinners and oppressors. Yet this effect is central in biblical sources, especially the letters of Paul.⁴⁴⁴

Cahill's vision of justice, then, includes transformative freedom for the oppressor as well as the oppressed victim. Moreover, while she appreciates the call for solidarity with victims (including God's solidarity with them), justice as a solution must include forgiveness. And I believe this is the value of her deliberate retrieval of the foundational tenets of the Thomistic moral tradition, specifically Aquinas' understanding of human freedom and the human will to transcend. Her central argument in this regard is as follows:

The cross as atonement must speak both to victims and to perpetrators and must be kept together with incarnation and resurrection. In the end, the meaning of the cross cannot be grasped fully through conceptual analysis and systematic theology. Instead, salvation and the cross must be *appropriated, tested, and integrated* through the kinds of Christian practices (liturgy and ethics) within which New Testament metaphors for salvation were generated in the first place.⁴⁴⁵

In this respect, I would characterize Cahill's theology as open to the effects of self-appropriation as Lonergan has described it within his heuristic of interiority.

⁴⁴⁴ Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Global Justice, Christology and Christian Ethics*, 206.

⁴⁴⁵ Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Global Justice, Christology and Christian Ethics*, 207. Emphasis mine.

Overall Cahill's analysis of human freedom and agency stems from a group-bias analysis that critiques the extent that established systems of one's society promote or deny human flourishing to all members of society. While her methodology carefully blends elements from the Catholic moral tradition with the main ideals of Catholic feminist theology, her approach to the oppression of women in any context (including the ongoing state of Catholic patriarchy) reflects a group bias approximation, as she does not differentiate or identify separate notions of bias as Lonergan does.

Her notion of how to achieve justice, however, reflects a fuller appreciation of the role of God's grace and his forgiveness of sin than is evident in most feminist theologies. On this basis, Cahill's work is open to a Lonerganian tripolar dialectical analysis that includes God's theological response to injustice as a reality already operative within and in spite of structurally oppressive situations.

At this point, I hope to have sufficiently explained how the limitations of a more traditional group-bias analysis, common among feminist theologies, can be advanced with specific analytical tools from Lonergan. Chiefly, Lonergan argues for the subjectivity of the theologian, having engaged in the process of self-appropriation within the third realm of meaning (interiority) which allows a much fuller discovery and analysis of the meanings and values appropriated by the agents in the context in question, far beyond the basic historical facts and events identified through analysis that reflects theological operation with the first two realms of meaning (common sense and theory).

Insofar as the contextual theologian recognizes and differentiates between Lonergan's three realms of meaning, she can then make the shift from theory to interiority. In so doing, dialectical analysis then reveals how its agents appropriate value and meaning themselves, including the value of divine transcendence already operative within their lives.

It is at this point that the theologian perceives the necessary role of God and God's love through operative and cooperative grace, thereby moving the theologian to adopt a tripolar dialectical approach, the comprehensive solution of which must be theological in that it can only be effectuated along with God's agency. This insight must then reframe notions of justice to understand how our response involves cooperation with a divine agency that is already operative. This is precisely why humanly-designed and justice-based solutions are limited in their effectiveness.

This realization then enables the theologian to 're-define' the problem of oppression from a human problem pointing to human solutions, to a more comprehensive problem that requires a higher viewpoint—one that can only be discovered in conjunction with God's active agency in our lives.

6.3. Moving Beyond the Parameters of Traditional Feminist Theologies: The Value of Copeland's Methodology

Like many feminist theologies, a bipolar group-bias feminist analysis of the phenomenon of black slavery would describe its effects on black women and the impact on their agency based on the historical facts of the context. It would

characterize the bipolarity of the dialectic in terms of the two main groups of agents: the oppressors and the oppressed. This would include how racial and gender objectification are manifested on the group level of society and on the individual level of personal intersubjectivity. It would seek to identify the operative power of the oppressing group and the specific injustices carried out on its victims. It would further seek to quantify the impact of injustice, as well render judgment on the effects of the context based on their horrendous nature and the suffering and death that slavery caused. It could even attempt to identify how manifestations of slavery and its effects continue to affect black women today. However, in terms of qualifying the objective meaning of the distorted values within the context itself, such analysis would be limited.

As a womanist theologian, Copeland's approach on the other hand reflects a tripolar theological dialectical analysis by employing specific tools from Lonergan. As such, she is able to qualify the positive and negative meanings of such a distortion of human living by uncovering the operative values in the lives of her subjects. She begins by characterizing her context of study in this manner, in terms of the multi-faceted consciousness of its victimized agents:

'black' religion emerges from the darker and contradictory side of the Enlightenment—its advent heralded by expropriation, enslavement, murder, territoriality, and colonialism. Thus, the origin of 'black' religion denotes a particular, historical, cultural, spiritual and perhaps even divinely revealed phenomenon. The term *black* functions not as an adjective, for it neither modifies nor adorns; rather the 'black' in black religion signifies and demarcates a dense horizon of meaning and value—a worldview, a consciousness.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴⁶ M. Shawn Copeland, "Blackness Past, Blackness Future — and Theology," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 112:4 (2013): 632.

Hence, her context of study does not rest merely on the historical facts of the event of black slavery in American history. She begins by viewing the oppressed women in her context as obviously lacking in physical freedom, but who still live as whole beings who exercise positive agency. Yes, this context is historical in its horizon, and Copeland does study, question, and analyze the historical basis of slavery and its life-crushing effects on black women. However, she views the problem of this phenomenon in more comprehensive terms. For she is not just asking how the problem of how slavery can be abolished, but she has transposed the problem of slavery into a theological one of how we can cooperate with God's grace within structures of evil so that our lives involve a perpetual effort to halt and reverse the longer cycles of decline that result from the general bias. As such, Copeland looks directly to the religious and spiritual consciousness of the victims for clues.

As elucidated in the previous chapter concerning her work, the solution at which she arrives is theological in its origins in that her methodology is based on a tripolar approach. I offer a summary of my justification for this assessment of her work in five points.

The first principle tool from Lonergan that Copeland employs is Lonergan's notion of bias, specifically the polymorphous nature of human bias in its various forms. In so doing, Copeland is able to identify the phenomenon of racism as operative within Lonergan's first two realms of meaning: common sense and theory. With the realm of common sense thinking, she notes that racist thinking and behaviour are driven by the combination of the general and group biases, where reactions to difference are sensory driven, common, and a part of everyday

living—where one’s understanding of difference is based more on opinion than informed theory. While the group bias of the racialized context becomes stratified throughout society, the general bias of common sense reinforces it by disregarding the insights and innovations that may come from those on the outside of privilege in favour of immediate sensory gratification induced by the power of privilege.

From Copeland’s theological perspective, institutionalized racism is not just manifested in bigotry that supports commonly sanctioned and legitimized processes of power in one’s society, but it also seeks to undermine the very spirituality of those it oppresses, privileging the ruling oppressors’ notion of who God is over who God wants to be within the existentially oppressed.

But through delving into how these women have discovered ways to appropriate meaning and how they have traversed the process of self-appropriation, Copeland ascertains the extent to which they surmounted the racism that permeated their lives toward a fuller agency that included God’s transcending presence. In this way, her analysis includes, but transcends, the limitations of a group-bias analysis to one that includes the recognition and effects of the general bias, and how her subjects responded to these effects outside of victimhood.

Second, in approaching the problem of slavery in American history, Copeland observes and judges her data, including historical data. However, her research does not merely consist of collecting data to form a picture of the socio-historical reality of subject. She specifically asks questions of her subject’s agency that seek to identify *how* her subjects responded to the warped and evil value system imposed on them and, more importantly for my purposes here, how her

subject's agency was constituted as *an originator of values* within such a broken scale of values.

With this kind of inquiry, Copeland effectively discovers that the depth of agency of her subject matter reflected the opposite of how their oppressors viewed and treated them as inhuman objects. By understanding Lonergan's insistence that knowing is not taking a good look, Copeland is able to probe beyond the historical facts of the context. For example, because Copeland is looking for how these women appropriated meaning in all facets of their lives, specific descriptions of the lives of these slave women elucidated in the data of biographical narratives and the lyrics of slave spirituals offer rich, multi-layered truth. Such analysis yields data that reflect the whole of agency—including the physicality, emotionality, spirituality, and religiosity of these women, not just the limitations of their agency within the oppressive state.

This allows Copeland to qualify the positive and negative meaning and values that were operative in the lives of these women—indeed, we are then permitted to glimpse into the multi-dimensional aspects of their lives, including their bodies, beings, intersubjectivity, and consciousnesses. Copeland remarks that what is “at stake in this endeavour is whether concepts result from understanding or understanding from concepts. As a mode of human knowing, conceptualism fails utterly to grasp the relation of universals to particulars.”⁴⁴⁷ Hence with her

⁴⁴⁷ M. Shawn Copeland, “Blackness Past Blackness Future,” 631.

methodology, she attempts and accomplishes a much deeper understanding of her subject matter.

Indeed, her methodology allows for the consciousness to speak and to reveal meaning for the black slave within the realm of her own interiority by specifically probing how these women experience, inquire, understand, judge, value, and love those with whom they live, most especially God. This provides Copeland with a horizon of understanding that is far deeper than the appropriation of historical facts and events. Because she understands the difference between how values are appropriated in Lonergan's different realms of meaning, she is able to identify how her subjects do the same, which reflect their whole of being.

Third, with Lonergan's empirical approach Copeland is able to question how theoretical controls of meaning are also affected by bias and unquestioning tradition. By recognizing how more traditional and classicist frameworks of thought actually continue to control the meaning of values as successive generations try to re-appropriate them in the light of rapidly changing cultures, Copeland holds such a dialectic up to Lonergan's notion of historical consciousness. This allows her to carefully critique tradition, particularly Catholic doctrine, in the light of Church tradition beyond the level of theoretical controls arising from the second realm of meaning (theory). With the shift to interiority, Copeland effectively qualifies how Church doctrine (e.g., the Church's stance on homosexuality) does not attend to both data of sense and data of consciousness.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁸ See M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, specifically chapter three, "Marking the Body of Jesus, the Body of Christ".

Fourth, precisely because Copeland is able to differentiate how Lonergan's modes of bias operate, her analysis also exhibits that her subjects do not submit to *ressentiment* as victims of oppression, that despite the anger and bitterness they felt toward their oppressors, they looked to God to deliver them from living with such hate. Rather than become derailed by the horror of their oppressive state and demonize their masters, they turned to God for transcendence through his liberating act of love.

This, in itself, constitutes part of the solution that Copeland ultimately recommends to injustice: through prayerful action in response to God's operative grace, hate can be overcome. And Copeland argues that the theologian must also be self-aware of the potential that *ressentiment*, as a form of bias, can always creep into our theological analysis. By recognizing *ressentiment* as the ever-present, common sense norm of the human reaction to injustice, the theologian can account for its potential presence and the fact that it held no place in the life and ministry of Christ.

Fifth, this leads us to Copeland's theological solution to human injustice, which aptly reflects Lonergan's solution to human bias and proves that resistance to oppression does not include revenge or hate. While Copeland's contextual focus centres on the theological agency of black women in American history, her mode of theological analysis does not limit her to justice-based solutions that are found within other feminist theologies.

Copeland's solution certainly reflects the feminist theological notions of solidarity and praxis, but with her analysis of the group and general biases at work

in her context of study, these two concepts become enlarged to incorporate divine meaning. Her notion of solidarity, rather, does not rest on human actions alone, but is expanded to recognize and include divine solidarity where we act in solidarity for the victim *in conjunction* with God and his gift of grace already at work.

Copeland's notion of praxis is also more nuanced, one that insists on the element of prayerful hope—where prayer is reach and risk. As she so effectively illustrates, this leads to the existential discovery of divine sacrifice in the salvation of our own lives and of those whom we study. Because prayer leads us away from bias to the self-sacrificial love of God, it effectuates the solidarity and transformation of ourselves, among us toward God and the greater good of human living.

It is this reorientation, rooted in God's love for us, that directs us beyond human solutions to injustice (such as structural reform) toward a redemptive solidarity in Christ. This divine love frees us to identify value and truth and to allow God to effectuate moral, intellectual and religious authenticity in us. Copeland's analysis of black women's suffering and subjugation reveals this truth: the solution to their oppression was rooted in the cognitive and existential discovery of God's true virtue of hope, redemption, and love and could only be found in their living relationship with God.

By identifying and understanding how the general bias of common sense operates, we can then surmise that a solution to oppression is not ours to create alone through efforts at justice. Rather theological analysis that includes both the group bias and the general bias of common sense opens an avenue for the

theologian to reshape the way justice is traditionally viewed, one that includes God's active agency that transforms human agency even in the darkest hours of human living.

Copeland herself views Lonergan's value for contextual theologies as primarily fourfold.⁴⁴⁹ First, Lonergan asks the theologian to pay attention to the concrete and particular of difference, but also reminds us that as we are all different in terms of race, religion, experience, we are all part of the universal whole, intrinsically and metaphysically connected.

Second, Lonergan makes us pay attention to human experience with technical precision, particularly when the subject is viewed through the lens of patterned living: biological, aesthetic, artistic, mystical, etc. Such specificity cannot help but strengthen analysis, judgment, and conclusions.

Third, the practice of Lonergan's methodology prompts the process of self-correction in the theologian. Although as scholars we pride ourselves in the quality of our work, Lonergan reminds us that we must possess the humility and the self-attention to identify our own biases at work in our personal and professional lives.

Finally, Copeland is ever-aware of the value of including questions in her theological analysis about the universal presence of the general bias. The value of it, as she notes, is that it forces one to ask different questions of bias: "[I]t enlarges

⁴⁴⁹ M. Shawn Copeland, "Edging (Toward) the Center" 91-92.

one's idea of what bias really is,"⁴⁵⁰ including that of the oppressor and the oppressor's motivations.

In sum, Copeland's threefold method of inquiry (suspicion, resistance, and critical realism), imbued with Lonergan's GEM, allows her to objectify her subject's actual process of self-transcendence, which she then illuminates with the light of faith. Her work directly reflects Lonergan's argument that true justice and divine charity are inseparable.⁴⁵¹ This does not diminish the necessity of justice as part of the solution to oppression, but expands the solution to better reflect theologically the true nature and scope of the problem. In sum, that is what is principally revealed in Copeland's approach to oppression, with the application of key tools from Lonergan.

6.4. Other Possible Analytical Tools from Lonergan for Feminist Theologies and Suggestions for Further Research

I have focused on Lonergan's notions of bias and realms of meaning within human living as specific instruments for a deeper analysis within feminist theologies. However, the value of Lonergan for this field of contextual theology (indeed, I would contend for many contextual theologies) is actually greater. In this chapter's remaining section, I will very briefly present a few other avenues that I believe would be of use to feminist theologians as well as feminist scholars in other

⁴⁵⁰ M. Shawn Copeland, in conversation with the author, June 19, 2014, Department of Theology, Boston College.

⁴⁵¹ See Bernard Lonergan, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St Thomas Aquinas*. Frederick Crowe and Robert Doran (eds.) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000) 353.

fields who address oppression against women. I have explained the first two in considerable detail in chapters two and three. The analysis I developed here provides a basis for identifying and pursuing other directions for future research.

Lonergan's integral scale of human values, I believe, has inordinate value for contextual theologians in general including feminist theologians. As a heuristic for Lonergan's own analysis of the value of values at all levels of human living, he contends that human feelings accord with values within a scale of preference that is ultimately identified by those living within it. Furthermore, the ultimate good of human living "has an identifiable content that some things are objectively unjust."⁴⁵²

First, I see this scale as a very clear model to situate and to characterize an oppressive force in a societal context in terms of the operative values (positive and negative) within it. When applied in its fullest, it can help the analyst to determine the extent of development or decline regarding the overall health and stability of the vital, social, cultural, personal, and religious values at play within a society. Its value as a benchmark for ethical living helps the critical analyst overcome the ambiguity of historical fact, particularly the ambiguity of agency response to oppression. As we saw with Copeland's work, the response of black slave women to the distorted values within their lives actually constituted them as polymorphic originators of value, which became the means through which they responded to divine grace and enacted self-transcendence. A tightly defined structure of human values, particularly Lonergan's, can help one to measure the extent of oppression

⁴⁵² Michael McLaughlin, *Knowledge, Consciousness and Religious Conversion in Lonergan and Aurobindo*. (Rome: Gregorian Biblical BookShop, 2003) 120.

in terms of societal decline by pinpointing the location of dialectic, and to position responses to value in terms of its agents. I would specifically recommend the work that Robert Doran has carried out in advancing Lonergan's notion of the scale of values.⁴⁵³

At this point in the evolution and advancement of feminist theologies, particularly feminist theological ethics, I believe further attention is warranted to the possible role of *ressentiment* and the impact it has on the theologian in the process of critical analysis. My sense is that its presence, acting as a scotoma or bias, may perpetuate not only victimhood of the oppressed but a bipolar dialectical analysis, preventing theological reflection from identifying the necessary role of divine grace and forgiveness as part of a suitable theological solution to injustice. For, as I have argued in this work, if a theological solution to injustice only focuses on delivering the victim out of her oppressive state of living, it is not wholly theological within the Christian context of ethical discernment. In this vein, the work of Patrick Byrne is an excellent starting point for further research on the role of *ressentiment* in contextual theological inquiry.

Furthermore, when this notion is juxtaposed with Lonergan's notion of the general bias, one is able to place the idea of *ressentiment* in a much more defined light, particularly as it relates to the act of valuation. By identifying the existence of this phenomenon and its effects on agency within a particular context, as Copeland has pointed out, the theologian is then able to question herself about any possible

⁴⁵³ In particular, see Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, chapter four.

existence of it in her own theologizing. This can only make for more objective and stronger theological output. It can also bring the theologian closer to realizing the need for a more comprehensive theological solution that identifies the role of God as a necessary active agent in the process.

Finally, I want to mention the value of Lonergan's notion of emergent probability as it relates to theological solutions to oppression and cycles of human decline and development. As I stated in the third chapter, it is likely the densest and most complex of Lonergan's notions and I do not, once again, claim to understand it thoroughly. Nevertheless, based on my limited understanding of emergent probability, I am able to recognize its value for theological ethics.

Lonergan defines emergent probability as: "a conditioned series of schemes of recurrence that are realized in accord with successive schedules of probabilities."⁴⁵⁴ Conditions that affect series of schemes of recurrence are one of two types: the non-systematized that occur due to coincidence and those that emerge because they are conditioned to do so. A higher viewpoint, such as that which would bring about a cluster of insights capable and willed to shorten the longer cycle of decline, emerges because lower systems of knowing and being can no longer adequately respond to the questions and insights they generate. Examples of this would be a continued over-reliance on common sense understanding to solve problems that require higher integrations of thought and

⁴⁵⁴ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 156.

meaning, or Lonergan's explanation of the emergence of higher, more advanced forms of science.

The point I wish to make is that if one thinks of the converted theologian, one who has traversed the process of self-appropriation and is able to differentiate between the values of human living that emerge in the four distinct realms of meaning, the theologian's dialectical analysis can then be considered a form of an emergent probability—one that is situated to help bring about a higher viewpoint in response to human oppression.

This is an area of theology that warrants further insight. It is my sense, based on my understanding of emergent probability, that it can help us understand cycles of decline and development in the whole of human history with precision, and furthermore, that states of oppression do not emerge as a happenstance of history or as a given consequence of human nature. Rather, they emerge due to previous conditions. As Lonergan explains, "From the structural unification of the methods by generalized emergent probability, there follow the structural account of the explanatory genera and species and the immanent order of the universe of proportionate being. Such are the elements of metaphysics."⁴⁵⁵ Hence, for the theologian who is morally converted, the cognitive process of ethical discernment in Lonergan's specialty of dialectic is the same as that in one's life. The two, then, will serve to reinforce each other as an emergent condition for the discovery of authenticity in human living. A positive condition is then set for the emergence of a

⁴⁵⁵ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 486.

higher viewpoint that would constitute the realization of the necessity of “the higher integration in the realm of being [that] is the transformation of the human subject resulting from God’s gift of grace.”⁴⁵⁶

On this point, the work of Kenneth Melchin and the more recent work of Cynthia Crysdale is instructive. In Crysdale’s treatment of emergent probability, she makes two key points worth mentioning here. First, if one overlooks the dynamic unfolding of emergent conditions and instead views human history as some sort of ongoing mechanical determinism whereby “justice operates as a mathematical equation, which God resolved by offering his Son to equal the balance left by sin’s deficit...[not] only does this ignore the way the world actually works, it ultimately places such justice over above God and incorporates violence into God’s very nature.”⁴⁵⁷ Moreover, when sin is viewed through a Christological lens *and* seen as a cycle of decline, one can then see how human effort alone cannot reverse it. But we can help to effect the emergence of a specific set of conditions that open up humanity to God’s grace, and we can influence its trajectory. In short, this aspect of Lonergan’s thought is worth further discovery and application in this field of inquiry.

⁴⁵⁶ Kenneth Melchin, *History, Ethics and Emergent Probability*, 247.

⁴⁵⁷ Cynthia Crysdale, “The Law of the Cross and Emergent Probability,” in Christopher Denny and Christopher McMahon (eds.), *Finding Salvation in Christ: Essays on Christology and Soteriology in Honour of William P. Loewe* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011) 213, and Cynthia Crysdale and Neil Ormerod, *Creator God, Evolving World* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2013).

6.5 Conclusion

With this chapter, I have tried to bring together the key insights of my research and study on the specific contributions that I believe Lonergan can make to methodologically advance feminist theologies. While I do not discount the tested methods of feminist theologians, and believe in their importance for critiquing oppression against women, I hope that what I have discovered through Lonergan's thought, as applied by M. Shawn Copeland, can further develop the valuable hermeneutical tools of this necessary and very relevant field in theology.

With this study, I hope to have offered a meaningful contribution the feminist theological methodology. I believe I have done so on three principal counts. First, I identified how Copeland uses the thought of Bernard Lonergan in assessing a specific contextual bias against women, to suggest that Lonergan's approach to bias may prove valuable to other feminists. This would contribute to the limited but important body of scholarly research that calls for closer ties between not only Lonergan and feminist theology, but Lonergan and the larger field of critical liberation theory. Unfortunately, it is largely agreed by scholars within the Lonergan community that his work is much overlooked by secular philosophers and social scientists due to his perceived subjectivity as a theologian. His work is also overlooked by many theologians who may find his notions complex and thereby inaccessible as well. I hope to have contributed in some valuable measure to closing this perceived knowledge gap.

Second, by specifically choosing the work of M. Shawn Copeland, I hope to have aptly illustrated the versatility of a Lonerganian application to sin constituted

by human oppression. Indeed, Copeland's methodology reveals data beyond the meanings and values that can be appropriated by agency assessed within a group-bias analysis and effectively discloses the extent of authentic agency of her subject matter in the light of grace. Her solution, I conclude, is more suitably theological since it is based on divine-human agency. I believe this can advance the project of justice and human agency, and the ways they are traditionally understood within theology.

Third, the ability to identify the general bias of common sense and apply it in conjunction with the group-bias analysis arises in the theologian from the process of interiority that Lonergan locates within the third realm of meaning. Although this work of self-appropriation is subjective, it serves to place the burden of self-evaluation on the theologian with respect to the existence and influence of personal biases on one's work (such as *ressentiment*). If one is able to authentically discern such self-biases, as Lonergan argues and Copeland reminds us, then dialogue among differing theological perspectives can only prove more fruitful toward the discovery of a theological solution to human oppression.

In closing, it is my sincere, prayerful hope that such advancement will bring about theological solutions to counter oppression against women in any context, solutions that hasten just, grace-full living for all.

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