

## **Towards a Rigorous Basis for a Natural Law Theory of Integration**

Frederick D. Boley

*Fr. Bernard Lonergan (1904–1984) proposed that human desire can prove the existence of God. The structure of human thought implies a Final Answer to the set of all questions, which can only be what everyone calls “God”—but what implications does this fact have for human happiness, and for counseling? This paper argues that counseling must have, as its ultimate aim, helping people to know Goodness, Beauty, and Truth, which is God. The fact that we can observe the facts about human cognition means that Catholic Christian counselors can ethically and effectively work with people from any faith tradition.*

Suppose we did not know that there was a God. Suppose, further, that we were nice people, who wanted everyone to enjoy a subjective sense of well-being—clients, colleagues, family, friends. We know that some people have what might be described as quaint, backward traditions concerning powerful, invisible beings, which are, as we believe that science shows us, completely imaginary. But we do want them to enjoy a subjective sense of well-being! Therefore, we allow them to talk about their little hobby, the imaginary side of life, with other people who share their friendship with Harvey, the giant, imaginary rabbit.

Imagine a second scenario. We are Ruritarians. We have funny little ways of thinking about things. But we are also trained, and work as therapists in the big city. How do we talk to fellow Ruritarians in therapy? They will be put off if we adopt our usual therapist way of talking; on the other hand, we cannot just lapse into Ruritanian as professionals. There must be some way of harmonizing the two. After all, the previous tradition in therapy of complete de-Ruritaniation has relaxed to a considerable degree—they now allow us to talk a little Ruritanian to our fellow countrymen! So we spend a considerable amount time talking about this niggling problem, and develop competing schools of thought (Ruritanian People’s Front as opposed to the People’s Ruritanian Front, perhaps).

These are the vague, kindly approaches to the integration of therapy and spirituality which this paper sets out to destroy.

Objectively observed facts of human nature imply an approach to therapy that is consonant with faith (Boley 2017; see also Brugger 2009). This is a theme that has been explored by Helminiak (2001). Presentations such as Helminiak (2001) tend to appeal to those who are already persuaded; or fall into the trap of patronizing religion (“why it’s OK to humor religious hobbyists”). However, Helminiak (2001) refers to something that is vague and will probably have little interest for people who are not materialists of some sort. If when you look up at the stars you do not wonder who could have put them there, then most of current integration will have little interest for you, frankly.

The model charted by Brugger (2009) is an advantage over standard integration texts (Collins 1981, 2000; Jones 1994, 2010; Roberts and Watson 2010; Myers 2010; etc.). However, Brugger 2009 is in outline form, as the author readily concedes: it does not explicitly identify first principles, nor does it provide rigorous argumentation. It may comfort the afflicted, in the old chestnut, but it does little to afflict the comfortable; it is, in its current form, no challenge to the comfortable status quo, because it relies on the reader’s investment in the Catholic worldview. Furthermore, Brugger 2009, though suggestive, does not chart any clear course for working with non-believers.

Therefore, in the present paper, a tighter argument is presented, from new premises. This paper takes up Brugger’s (2009) Premise VIII (Humans Are Rational) and provides a more rigorous underpinning, and a more complete explanation of the internal structure of this aspect of human nature. The implications are profound and several suggestions are offered for future courses of action.

Bernard Lonergan, the Catholic philosopher, offers a formal proof for the existence of God in *Insight* (1957). We are not interested as therapists in proving the existence of God, per se, but the proof offers us something else of great value: a proof of the key component of human happiness, which is an objective basis for integration.

First, it must be understood that persons abstract essences from the raw material of perceptions (Smith 1960; Machuga 2002). This has been illustrated with therapy clients, including children, by quickly scrawling a cartoon of a dog. What is this? Everyone says, “It’s a dog.” Of course, no non-human animal would make anything of it at all. A border collie or a chimpanzee could probably be trained to recognize a few written words as signals, but they could never be trained to understand signs (Deely 1982, 2000). That is to say, they could recognize the shape of a written word and recall things with which that signal has been associated, but they could never extract the meaning of the word. They might learn the shape of

the word *Camdenton* and even react to it by digging, say, but they could never learn to understand “Camdenton 10,” which would readily make any intelligent person discouraged or overjoyed, depending on the context. Humans deal directly with formal causes, that is, with the defining essences of things, rather than just the accidental or perceptual (Brennan 1941; Butera 2001). We then move on to second and third order abstractions; *kig* is a *neologism*; words are *symbols* rather than *signs*; neologisms are features of human *semiosis*; and so forth.

This act of abstraction cannot be done by mechanical means; neither computers nor androids nor any other machine will ever do it. In the same way that a measuring tape will never produce a measurement of temperature, neurocognitive science will never have any mechanical solution to the problem of how we start with perceptions and then actively abstract concepts or forms from them, as the process does not rely on our brains—it cannot, for the same reason that  $1 \neq 0$ , not ever. There is some question about what the ultimate difficulty for Artificial Intelligence may be, with some saying it is qualia—a computer will never feel what it is to experience redness, for example (Spitzer 2015: 216ff.). However, abstraction is equally insuperable for machines: no matter how a computer may be programmed, no matter how much data is entered, it cannot abstract a new concept (Feser 2006; Machuga 2002).

Secondly, we humans also deal with relational concepts. Certain concepts cannot be understood without understanding them in relationship (Kreeft 2010). For example, the concept *father* cannot be understood without the concept *child*; the two concepts also assume the concept of *reproduction*, which in turn cannot be understood without the other two concepts. One of the most important relational concepts is, of course, causation. There are several ways to understand causation—it can either imply teleology or efficient causation (final cause or efficient cause in traditional language). Most scholars and ordinary people seem to be most interested in the issue of efficient causation.

For the Scholastics, however, there are two kinds of causal series (Feser 2009). The temporal series is the one we are all familiar with. Everyone, according to St. Thomas, wants to know causes of perceived effects (St. Thomas’s *Summa Contra Gentiles* III, chap. 25, n. 11—a good discussion of this is found in Feingold 2010: 35). A plate shatters on the floor—we want to know “what happened?” by which we mean, “What was the sequence of causes that led to this disaster?” We are usually content to work backwards until we reach what we consider the status quo (“Billy was running in the house—again!” [and before that, the status quo]). The causal series is pursued only to see what was out of the ordinary.

But that is only because we have worked out the status quo and have not cultivated the habit of asking *why* past a certain point; we are busy, we are tired. Nevertheless, it is worth remembering that the expression is not *status quo* but *status quo ante*. We still want, in at least an attenuated form, to work back to the way things were before, all the way back to a cause that is very first in time: “How did this world become the way it is?” And in this case, it would mean asking what led Billy to run, what events led up to the cat being in the dining room in the first place, etc.

This is the basis for the famous argument from First Cause, of course. However, St. Thomas actually makes a more powerful case for this than is often acknowledged, as Edward Feser has explained in various places (2004, 2008, 2009), because Thomas’ argument from First Cause is not based on the temporal series of causes, but has to do, rather, with instantaneous series (in which the regression is logical instead of temporal). So, St. Thomas is thinking more in terms of how humans pursue questions as four-year-olds do.

Mother: “It broke because it hit the floor.”

Four-year-old: “Why?”

M: “Because the floor is hard.”

Four-year-old: “Why is the floor hard?”

M: “It’s made of stone.”

Four-year-old: “Why is stone hard?”

M: “Erm, the chemicals connect together in crystals in a way that make them hard.”

Four-year-old: “Why do they do that?”

The regression pursued this way very quickly stumps us, after appealing to laws of physics (or even earlier), and here, unlike in temporal series, we quickly find that the only possible final answer to questions such as “Why is there a Van der Waal’s force?” is ‘Deus vult.’

The really important series for our consideration is, in fact, this instantaneous series: Why are things the way they are? or Why is there anything at all? By positing a God, a necessary cause outside of the chain of contingent causes, we are not proposing a “God of the gaps” to cover our ignorance of the causes for a particular physical phenomenon; we are pointing, rather, to the impossibility of using mechanical explanation to explain why mechanical explanation works at all.

John Deely, the late great semiotician, argued that relationship is primary (1982, 2000), and Lonergan (1957) agrees. To be able to understand

anything is to understand its formal cause, its essence; and to understand the essence of something is to understand the range of potentialities for the thing under consideration. If you know what a banana is, you would not think it could serve as a part of speech (“you’ve declined that wrong, it’s actually a banana”), nor would any healthy person use it to take down a number; but you would especially not say, “We have to consider the banana’s opinion.” Lonergan (1957) thinks of the way we deal with abstractions and relationships in terms of asking questions: who, what, where, why, and when; but each of these basic questions aims to illuminate a relationship, a dimension along which something can vary. This is what Lonergan (1957) calls a *heuristic notion*.

My grandmother used to recount that, when she was a little girl, she had never been to town before, and had never been inside a shop; so, the first time she saw a store, she thought she had to knock at the door. That it seems funny shows the tacit rule: knock or ring at private houses, but walk straight into retail places (Americans are confronted with the same tacit rule when first seeing the Italian sign in shops, “Entrata Libera”). We have a lot of tacit rules about social interactions, but we have a great many more tacit rules, or heuristic notions, even more rarely examined, in order to think. Lonergan (1957) observes that to ask the question “Why,” a number of notions are required.

First, we have to have an idea of *possibility*. Things could be otherwise; to ask *why*, we have to know, first, that any particular set of circumstances does not exhaust all of reality—by asking the question, we show that we know that the circumstance could be different. Another way of saying this is that, when we realize that this circumstance is but one of many possible circumstances, we ask why we have this particular set of circumstances and not another.

But that assumes a second intellectual structure: the concept of *reality*. We have to recognize the difference between imagination and reality, between what was, and what is now; between what we fear or hope for, and what is now.

When we acknowledge that what is now could be different, we also assume a third thing: that this current set of circumstances is not necessary, that it is in fact *contingent*, and that therefore it cannot explain itself. Something that is necessary needs no cause; anything that is contingent requires a cause.

Lonergan (1957) argues, finally, that we have to have a fourth implicit idea, that of *reality-as-a-whole* in order to ask *Why*. We have this “super-category” (Spitzer 2015: 98) of *reality-as-a-whole*, and a corresponding super-category of *all-that-is-possible-but-not-currently-real*. We do not

wonder “Why is  $1 = 1$ ?” but we do wonder things like, “Why are apples red?” This is because the idea “ $1 \neq 1$ ” is not in our category of all-that-is-possible-but-not-currently-real, but blue apples are. If we heard that Japanese scientists had developed a blue apple, we might be disgusted but we wouldn’t find the sentence incoherent.

So, although we do not often think about it, we all have the notions of reality and of necessity and contingency, from the moment we form sentences. Furthermore, although we all have them, they are not something we learn, because they are necessary preconditions to attaining any propositional knowledge (Lonergan 1957). These concepts seem to be part of our patrimony as humans.

Someone might well ask, “Couldn’t we acquire Lonergan’s preconditions through associations?” The super-categories do not, in fact, apply to associations, and could not possibly be formed by means of them. Associations are formed by our nervous system interacting with the environment, in a physical way (as St. Thomas recognized, although he did not have the detailed physiological information we have; Brennan 1941; Butera 2001). But as mentioned, no number of new stimuli or associations will allow a dog or pygmy chimp to make a single abstraction. *Association* relates to *notion* proportionately as *correlation* relates to *causation*. It is, in fact, only by means of notions that we can develop notions or abstractions.

It might also be objected that we learn to ask *Why* when see something twice, as an infant, and notice that the second incidence is different from the first. We see it for a fourth time and it is different yet; we are a little surprised each time (recall the famous habituation studies with infants, in which their power to discriminate is assessed by their reaction to projected pictures [Goren, Sarty, and Wu 1975]). But there is nothing in these little surprises which can teach us to reach for the “why” tool, and nothing in the surprises which allow us to do so: there is a qualitative difference between noticing something and wondering why it is so.

Compare our response to a dog’s. He might experience four iterations, which could be characterized as follows: 1) “sausage!”; 2) “sausage/ketchup!”; 3) “small sausage!”; 4) “sausage raw-smelling!” All of these experiences are associated with “meat” and previous experiences with sausage smell and appearance, and may be linked (at various strengths) with the other Experiences which proceed and follow, and with any other current circumstances (“small,” “close,” “in possession of Grumpy Man,” etc.). But that is all: for the dog, there is no abstracting, just a series of associations, because in order to abstract, he would need the all-reality super-category. Our responses, by way of contrast, might be something more like 1) “Sausage”; 2) “Ketchup?!” (in other words, it is possible that sau-

sages may be eaten plain or with mustard, but someone has unaccountably chosen ketchup); 3) “Who ate half the sausage?” (we expect the sausage would usually remain the same size, and guess that half has disappeared due to illicit eating), and also “What happened to the ketchup?!” (things do not appear or disappear without cause; therefore there is a previously unnoticed cause); 4) “Oh, a new sausage—underdone.”

Furthermore, as abstractors, we can imagine something we have never experienced before, and desire it: “What if all the traffic lights were green?”; “What if you found \$100 on the sidewalk?”; “What if your wife let you choose the TV program?” What is most obvious to helping professionals is that we can imagine something we have never experienced, and fear it: “What if they discover I am an impostor and kick me out of grad school?” (For a thorough and persuasive account of the emotions from a Thomistic point of view, see Butera 2001).

Therefore, in order to use language, humans must have intentionality (they must *know that X* rather than just be familiar with *X*; e.g., we know that sausages are made of meat, whereas dogs just react to the smell of meat). And in order to have intentionality, to learn any proposition, that is, humans must have an innate desire to know why.

You might see, at this point, that there is also another prerequisite to asking the question *Why*: we have to have the tacit belief that an answer to a particular question actually exists among the super-category of all-things-real (Lonergan 1957). And that tacit belief must be that a real answer exists, one that is true and coherent, not just something made up or imaginary. In other words, according to Lonergan (1957), to ask *Why*, we must have a tacit belief in the intelligibility of the whole of reality. We have a notion of a complete set of questions, and a notion of a complete set of true and coherent answers to that complete set of questions. In other words, no-one ever asks *Why* if they think the answer would exist only in their own imagination or would be nonsensical or unknowable.

Once again, the source of such a notion must be proportional; but nothing in material, perceptual experience would be proportional; and we need the notion in order to learn new concepts in the first place, so we cannot have learned this tacit concept in a normal way because we need this tacit assumption to learn any concepts at all.

The “supreme heuristic notion” (Lonergan 1957) is the intelligibility of all of reality. You might consider the question proper to the supreme heuristic notion to be, “Is all of reality thinkable?” This, of course, is a necessary pre-condition for all the other heuristic notions, all relations: there must be a reality and it must be thinkable; otherwise, we could not even ask *Where*, let alone *Why*. In turn, heuristic notions allow us to use



syntax, to use relational ideas as predicates. They allow us to know something *about* something, they allow intentionality, in other words.

Therefore, that heuristic notions are innate is an unavoidable conclusion. There would be no way to get at the supreme heuristic notion without already having it: no-one asks a question without the assumption that there is a true answer possible. The structures by which we have heuristic notions are inherited genetically, of course, but there can be no physical cause of the heuristic notions themselves. They are part of human nature.

As it happens, the fact that heuristic notions are built in seems to be confirmed by cognitive science (Samet and Zaitchik 2017); but if cognitive science had not yet confirmed it (as it had not in 1957), then we would have to find the privation in cognitive science, not in Lonergan (1957). Logically speaking, it is impossible that heuristic notions cannot be congenital or “from the outside.”

Finally, Lonergan (1957) observes that there is a noteworthy property of *Why* behavior (that is, not a part of its essence, but an inevitable feature of it). Having the notion that there is a complete set of answers to a complete set of questions, we have an unrestricted desire to know the whole set; we have an assumption that “everything about everything is knowable” (Spitzer 2015: 101). What we want to know is “the complete and perfect answer” (ibid.). We always know that there is more that might be asked, even if we do not pursue the regression in every moment, and it is the song of the road to us, always calling us onward. Having the tool to ask *Why*, we are never again allowed to rest.

We have called the ability to ask “*Why*” *congenital*, but not genetic; it cannot have a physical cause, such as genetics, or it would be untrustworthy. So where does it come from? The source of these super-categories, the tacit concepts of “all-actual” and “all-possible-not-actual” cannot be anything contingent or limited, argues Lonergan (1957). In the same way that there can be no physical cause for us abstracting, there can be no contingent cause for “realized and unrealized possibilities of the whole of reality” (Spitzer 2015: 101). If there were a contingent cause, then it would be something which is actual but also possibly not-actual; in other words, we would not have a complete set of answers to the complete set of questions—our cause of the set-so-far requires yet another answer. How can we get this complete set of answers to all possible questions, without always creating one more unanswered question? In order for the answer train to get going, we cannot posit yet another answer boxcar, we have to have an answer locomotive. In order to get the instantaneous answer-series going, we need not just another contingent cause, but a necessary one.



It is easy to anticipate that the most common objection to this argument by non-philosophers is, “You are wrong, because I myself do not care about having the complete set of answers to the complete set of questions.” It cannot be denied that there are varying levels of the desire to learn among people, and varying levels of desire for learning at different times (rarely approaching the desire for air!). It is also certainly true that adults are apt to be impatient: “That’s just the way it is!” we say when we are questioned too far by a four-year-old. We learn to stop pursuing *Why* at the point when it has become impractical; the regression becomes choked out by the weeds of everyday life.

All things to be learned can be uninteresting or fascinating depending on who is posing the questions. A skilled teacher proposes contradictions and mysteries; by these, curiosity is reawakened. The argument is not that everyone always and at every moment feels the urge to know everything; but that there is a desire to know the ultimate answer, which is almost always dormant to greater or lesser extents, and which must, therefore, be awakened or reawakened. In fact, we actually inherit the full unlimited backwards regression as soon as we learn to use language, and we thus take up possession of our inheritance as thinking animals, and only give that up (partly, temporarily, practically) when we become busy with the practical demands of life. That we do not really lose it at all is demonstrated by the fact that we use it all the time to abstract, as shown above.

Another objection might be that we do not need to know everything, and it is not even proper for us to know everything—for example, we don’t need to know our neighbor’s private business. This is granted—St. Thomas distinguishes between *curiositas* and *studiositas* (Brennan 1941). It is probably helpful to think in terms of chains of questions; they are complete in that they work back all the way to the beginning, which is the beginning for all the chains. Our healthy desire is for *studiositas*, to understand very well the nature of ourselves and all this world, not to know every single answer to every single trivial question. We want to know the answer to the super-category question, and to relevant questions; our happiness is not enhanced by knowing celebrity gossip.

Lonergan (1957) concludes that there can be only one necessary and perfect answer to the set of all questions, which has to be the act of a perfect, non-contingent mind; and this everyone calls *God*.

In reality, there are three converging proofs. First, there is the mysterious ability to ask *Why*, which cannot come from a physical cause nor from engagement with the environment. How then does it come to be part of our human nature? It must have a cause outside of time and space. Secondly, nature does nothing in vain, as the Scholastics say: if there is a drive to

know the ultimate answer to the set of all questions why, then it would be unprecedented for there not to be a way to satisfy that (Lewis 1952, makes the same sort of argument based on the existence of joy). Finally, there is Lonergan's (1957) argument from contingency and necessity.

What are the implications for the helping professions?

First, it eliminates any other possible conception of therapy than this one: therapy is a spiritual activity. There is not logically any other possibility. What makes humans human is the ability to abstract; abstracting, we immediately see that things are different from what they might be, and we ask, explicitly and implicitly, *Why*. We share perception, problem-solving, cost/benefit estimation (at least on some level), and signal reading with non-human animals. We do not share abstraction with them; it is what makes us human. So, to pursue the answer to the *Why* question is the highest form of human activity (actually, as the transcendentals are interchangeable, as Brennan 1941 explains, then to love goodness and to admire beauty are also the highest forms of human activity). Whatever anyone's faith may be, it is demonstrated that this asking *Why* is part of a desire to know the answer to all the questions, and the answer to the set of all askable questions, whether He exists or not, is God. Therefore, to help humans flourish at the highest level, we must help them in their quest for God—and this is true even if God does not exist.

Suppose by way of argument that there is no God. We find ourselves in the absurd position of longing for someone who does not exist; in fact, the situation is even more absurd, because we find ourselves with the one essential element of our desire completely unavailable. This does not, however, change the nature of flourishing for humans: a simple subjective sense of well-being is unsatisfying and cannot be understood as true happiness. So even if we believe that there is no God, the happiest we can be is to be striving further along the path to an imaginary ultimate truth, goodness, and beauty; and one of the most important truths is that these three are really the same.

Of course, therapy as a spiritual activity can be done well—carefully and with close attention; or poorly, with little, confused, or no thought at all. Most seems to be done with little or no thought, at the present. But helping people to achieve true happiness includes both eliminating obstacles to this quest (the emphasis of clinical psychology and psychiatry), and more directly aiding the search (counseling). To understand what an obstacle is, and how it is impeding happiness, we need to have a clear understanding of human happiness, of course.

Second, it is absolutely not a poetic exercise to say that truth is required for human happiness. Lonergan's (1957) work is an airtight demon-

stration of this aspect of human nature: to be happy, we have to know the ultimate explanation of the world. To know the ultimate explanation, the necessary answer to the set of all questions, we have to think clearly, and to acknowledge the truth about all important aspects of life. But if truth is essential to human happiness, then the content of our spirituality, and the content of our therapy are of ultimate importance. We cannot callously make statements about each of us finding our own path, much less make references to “your truth” or “my truth”: indifferentism is contraindicated for human happiness. Since to know the truth (not just some truths) is essential for human happiness, we have to take very seriously the task of discovering and propagating the truth.

The third implication is that thought there may be several or many ways to relate the two disciplines, there can be no other basis for relating them. Currently and in the recent past, even thorough and scholarly integration theories, such as Eric Johnson’s (2007), speak of presuppositions, without bothering to identify and argue from first principles. But theories of integration are ultimately exercises in the philosophy of science, and there has to be, therefore, a way to appeal to principles which are logically prior to the two disciplines. Otherwise, the discussion becomes one of three things: one discipline evaluated in terms of another (e.g., a paper in physics is valued for how it rhymes and scans), which is absurd; an exchange about personal values (e.g., I am an introvert, so reflectiveness is elevated to a master trait by which all other lesser traits, such as chattiness and intrusiveness, are evaluated), which is absurd; or an expression of power (which is really the same, ultimately, as an exchange about personal values, with one of the personal values being “I am willing to coerce or manipulate others in order to win my own way.”), which is absurd and dangerous. The logically prior principle must be based on objective facts of human nature, as, in fact, we find with notions and abstractions.

Fourth, recognizing the factual basis of all therapy (second implication, above) charts a clear course for cross-confessional work. We need to show that we take it seriously and have a well-reasoned argument for the way we do things. We must not impose our own beliefs or values upon clients, but it is worthwhile recalling why not: It is considered that the power differential between client and professional, and the strict rules of confidentiality (among possibly a few more lesser factors) all give the professional an unfair degree of power over the client. The client must be respected as a thinking human being, not as something to be manipulated. Therefore, care must be used. But this does not obviate the basic requirement for all therapists to find the truth and convey it to their clients.

The basis for cross-confessional work is similar to the basis for integration of two disciplines: as logically prior principles must be identified for integration, common ground must be identified and embraced with cross-confessional clients. This might be at any number of places. A good flowchart of levels of belief is provided in Kreeft and Tacelli (2009). At the most basic level, all of us are humans and therefore everything said here about notions and abstraction applies. Everyone wants to know the truth, to enjoy beauty, and to be the recipient and benefactor of good deeds.

A good place to test-drive the cross-confessional practice of this might be with sexual relationships. The views of the Faith on sexual relationships are starkly at odds with that of most people living in the West today, but people cannot fully flourish as human beings if they do not know the truth about sexual relationships, whatever their faith. Budziszewski (2005) speaks of the frustrations that come from flouting the sacredness of that most sacred of human events—the creation of a new human being. Common fallacies: regarding sexual relationships as an artificial boost to self-esteem, which is doomed to bitter disappointment. As with all attempts to use, rather than love, other people, sooner or later, the user finds himself the weaker party, used rather than using, de-personified; and the whole process leads to profound alienation, rather than to an ego boost. We might ask our therapeutic moralistic deist client to what extent his ego is boosted or deflated by relationships

Secondly, regarding sex as another form of video game, a pastime, it is also doomed to bitter disappointment (Budziszewski 2005). Boredom and emptiness quickly follow. Commitment-free relationships have been compared to the horcruxes in Harry Potter: a part of the soul is left behind every time.

Third, people who believe in fidelity but also practice birth control look at sex as a sort of relationship-enhancer, similar to filling out a fun quiz. But no married couple can be unified by a common purpose if they render this most central part of their relationship meaningless or nonsensical. It is as if two friends, one blind and the other a double amputee, agree to work together: the blind friend takes his friend upon his back, and the man with amputated legs tells his blind friend exactly what he is seeing—but they only ever run in circles, and very carefully never actually go anywhere. What then is the point of the relationship? To practice contraception is to lie with your body; who wants to be a liar? It is the equivalent of bulimia.

Very good, the point is that although we have to move at the speed of the client, be discreet, and respect the client as a human being with the power of reason, it is wrong to let them pursue irrational and painful

approaches to life. It is unethical to place artificial barriers to a client's chances of knowing the ultimate answer. It is unethical to fail in our courage to point out truth to clients. If you see that your client regularly self-sabotages, you need to tell him so and help him to understand and believe it on a deep level. But self-sabotage is only probably true; other things are much more clear and worthy of belief.

Fifth, all problems in human experience are disordered and misdirected expressions of the desire for God. In fact, all of human motivation, down to the simple large muscle motor neuron movement is an expression of the human desire for God. This is perhaps easiest to see when Bach says "*soli deo gloria*" or when Eric Liddell says "when I run, I feel His pleasure." But it is also there when a substance abuser relapses for the fifth time, too. Human happiness consists of knowing the Truth, adoring the Beautiful, and loving the Good; all goals of therapy, explicit and implicit, must therefore further clients towards these ends.

It is helpful to consider the most positive interpretation of client motivations. When the substance abuser relapses, it may well be true to say, "You care more for your own comfort or tingle of pleasure than for the welfare of your wife and children." But a person who screws up his life also does not know the right questions to ask, about himself and about the world. Motivational Interviewing does well here, but Reality Therapy also helps: what thoughts were going through your head when you did that? It is worthwhile to help clients dig deeper and examine assumptions. Who was it who prescribed feeling the hunger? Go to the edge of the undesired behavior, then hold up for just a moment; it's like bringing a dill pickle to your lips, and then holding off, so you can notice the salivation. I sometimes say this: "Don't give up drinking just yet; I want to know more about it. But when you are about to start drinking, hold off for five minutes, and let's examine what goes through your mind." The purpose of this sort of exercise, however, cannot be the usual CBT one, of relatively shallow analysis of client logic, but rather understanding how these strong, unexamined motivations are part of the client's desire for God. There is good reason to be discreet, but there is no reason to be coy. If the client is ready to hear it, then his motivations should be interpreted openly as more and less accurate expressions of the desire for the ultimate Truth, the ultimate Beauty, the ultimate Good, the ultimate being and home for each person.

You may know that in counseling, it is an article of faith that every action is understandable, given the history and situation of the client. But I am proposing a more radical article, based on evidence available to every open-minded person: every action of every human being, from heroic virtue to terrible wickedness, is understandable as a desire for God. Every

action stands in a hierarchy, with the ultimate aim being happiness, however ill-conceived it may be in particular persons at particular times. And according to the air-tight demonstration of Fr. Lonergan, happiness must be to find the final answer to the complete set of questions, the source of all beauty, the source of all the goodness we could ever hope to enact. So two things are proposed, here: 1) that it is worthwhile to recognize all motivations and actions as more and less effective and accurate attempts to find God, and thus move people closer to knowing Truth; and 2) that we should not be afraid to ask the Socratic questions, to explain, do anything effective to help someone fulfill this essential aspect of human nature.

The human ability to know, and the human desire to know everything, are the most straightforward way to get at the universal desire for the beatific vision. However, we know that all the transcendentals are interchangeable. So, what is true of the truth and our relationship to it, is equally true with regards to the good, the beautiful, and being. And especially at this time, and this culture, people seem more receptive of the beautiful and the good. Just as with the truth, we must interpret people's attempts to make sense of the world as their God-given desire for God; we need to understand pleasure-seeking; or the drive to order life and surroundings; or resentment at mistreatment; or love for music; as expressions of desire for God. And we have to help people tune these efforts in, so that they do not place undue hope in individual instances of beauty, for example, as Plato says; and so that they understand their behavior better.

Considerable work needs to be done to clarify how to develop good questions. The basic criteria should include the following, however: questions must enhance or elicit the desire for goodness, truth, and beauty; they must at the same time help people see that individual truths, particular beautiful things, or isolated acts of goodness are pointless outside of a context of an ultimate telos. Therefore, questions must also help people see that a hierarchy of good exists in their minds, and what a proper hierarchy of goods might look like. Cognitive dissonance must be aggravated to help people order goods properly and to elicit the desire for God

Interesting and difficult questions must be posed, not from the perspective of a practical atheism but from the perspective of realism. For a few who are philosophically-inclined, the instantaneous series can be posed (why is there anything?). But for most, it is probably more effective to stay closer to home. Questions designed to encourage the regression of Why questions: "You could get more for yourself if you did not sacrifice for others—why do you make sacrifices?" And "What do all beautiful things have in common?" and "Why is it important that things should be in excellent proportion?"

Loneragan's (1957) demonstration of the relationship of the human mind to causation thus has important implications for the helping professions. Even for atheist therapists and atheist clients, it is unavoidable that all humans must know truth in order to be happy; therefore, all therapists but especially Catholic Christian ones, need to be conscientious to know the truth about important matters, and as possible, to convey the truth to their clients.

### Acknowledgments

This project/publication was made possible through the support of a grant from the John Templeton Foundation, and the participation and direction of Brigham Young University. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the John Templeton Foundation or Brigham Young University. A version of this paper was presented at the Annual Convention of the Society of Catholic Social Scientists, at Belmont Abbey College, North Carolina, October 22nd, 2018.

### References

- Boley, F. D. 2017. "A Natural Law Approach to Resolving the Apparent Dilemma between the Demands of Faith and of the Helping Professions." Paper presented at the annual convention of the Society for Catholic Social Scientists, Steubenville, Ohio.
- Brennan, R. E. 1941. *Thomistic Psychology*. New York: Macmillan.
- Brugger, E. C. 2009. "Psychology and Christian Anthropology." *Edification: Journal of the Society for Christian Psychology* 3: 5–18.
- Budziszewski, J. 2005. "The Natural Laws of Sex: What We Lose When We Forget What Sex Is For." *Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity* 18(6) (July/August).
- Butera, G. 2001. *Thomas Aquinas on Reason's Control of the Passions in the Virtue of Temperance*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press.
- Collins, G. R. 1981. *Psychology and Theology: Prospects for Integration*. Nashville: Abingdon.
- Collins, G. R. 2000. "An Integration View," in *Psychology and Christianity: Four Views*, ed. E. L. Johnson and S. L. Jones, 102–29. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic.
- Deely, J. N. 1982. *Introducing Semiotic: Its History and Doctrine*, vol. 287. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Deely, J. N. 2000. "Greenbook: The Impact of Semiotics on Philosophy." Monograph retrieved from [www.helsinki.fi/science/commens/papers/greenbook.pdf](http://www.helsinki.fi/science/commens/papers/greenbook.pdf).



- Feingold, L. 2010. *The Natural Desire to See God according to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters*. Ave Maria, Fla.: Sapientia Press.
- Feser, E. 2004. *Aquinas: A Beginner's Guide*. London: OneWorld Beginner's Guides.
- Feser, E. 2006. *Philosophy of Mind: A Beginner's Guide*. London: One-world Publications.
- Feser, E. 2008. *The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism*. South Bend, Ind.: St Augustine's Press.
- Feser, E. 2009. *Aquinas: A Beginner's Guide*. London: Oneworld Publications.
- Feser, E. 2015. "What's the Deal with Sex? Part I." Retrieved January 27, 2015, from <http://edwardfeser.blogspot.com/2015/01/whats-deal-with-sex-part-i.html>.
- Goren, C. C., M. Sarty, and P. Y. Wu. 1975. "Visual Following and Pattern Discrimination of Face-Like Stimuli by Newborn Infants." *Pediatrics* 56(4): 544–49.
- Helminiak, D. A. 2001. "Treating Spiritual Issues in Secular Psychotherapy." *Counseling and Values* 45(3): 163–89.
- Holifield, E. B. 2005. *A History of Pastoral Care in America: From Salvation to Self-Realization*. Eugent, Ore.: Wipf and Stock Publishers.
- Johnson, E. L. 2007. *Foundations for Soul Care: A Christian Psychology Proposal*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.
- Jones, S. L. 1994. "A Constructive Relationship for Religion with the Science and Profession of Psychology: Perhaps the Boldest Model Yet." *American Psychologist* 49(3): 184.
- Jones, S. L. 2010. "An Integration View," in *Psychology and Christianity: Five Views*, 2nd ed., ed. E. L. Johnson, 101–28. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.
- Kreeft, P. 2010. *Socratic Logic: A Logic Text Using Socratic Method, Platonic Questions, and Aristotelian Principles*, 3rd ed. South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine's Press.
- Kreeft, P., and R. K. Tacelli. 2009. *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.
- Lewis, C. S. 1952. *Mere Christianity*. New York: Collier.
- Lonergan, B. 1957. *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*. New York: Philosophical Library.
- Machuga, R. 2002. *In Defense of the Soul: What It Means to Be Human*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press.
- Myers, D. G. 2010. "A Levels-of-Explanation View," in *Psychology and Christianity: Five Views*, 2nd ed., ed. E. L. Johnson, 49–78. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic.

- Piedmont, R. 2012. "Overview and Development of a Trait-Based Measure of Numinous Constructs: The Assessment of Spirituality and Religious Sentiments (ASPIRES) Scale," in *The Oxford Handbook of Psychology and Spirituality*, ed. L. J. Miller, 104–22. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pinckaers, S. (1995). *Sources of Christian Ethics*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Roberts, R. C., and P. J. Watson. 2010. "A Christian Psychology View," in *Psychology and Christianity: Five Views*, 2nd ed., ed. E. L. Johnson, 149–78. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.
- Samet, J., and D. Zaitchik. 2017. "Innateness and Contemporary Theories of Cognition," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2017 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta. Retrieved from [plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/innateness-cognition](https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/innateness-cognition).
- Smith, V. E. 1960. *The School Examined: Its Aim and Content*. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co.
- Spitzer, R. 2014. "Philosophical Proof of God: Derived from Principles in Bernard Lonergan's *Insight*." Available at <https://www.magiscenter.com/philosophical-proof-of-god-derived-from-principles-in-bernard-lonergans-insight/>.
- Spitzer, R. 2015. *The Soul's Upward Yearning: Clues to Our Transcendent Nature from Experience to Reason*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press.