

## ARTICLE

# Searching for “the” Method: A Lonerganian Critique of Oliver Freiberger’s Comparative Method

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines the methodologies of Bernard Lonergan and Oliver Freiberger to the (comparative) study of religion and theology. Lonergan’s “Transcendental Method” grounds itself in an individual’s conscious intentionality seeking objective reality and opening itself up to the ensuant sense of commitment, while Freiberger’s method emphasizes the acts of redescription and category-formation performed by the comparativist without delving into the question of objective reality or one’s existential commitment. Lonergan’s approach explains the fuller range of operations naturally performed by any (comparative) scholar, accounting for the fundamental orientation of all human beings to philosophical, ethical, and/or religious values. Freiberger’s approach, in contrast, offers its valuable insights to the descriptive and explanatory elements of comparison, attempting to retain the ideal of scholarly neutrality despite recognizing the universality of cultural and personal biases. Integrating both, I offer a framework for bridging the epistemic and axiological gap between comparative religious studies and (comparative) theology.

### **Keywords**

Lonergan, Freiberger, method, comparative religion, theology, Transcendental Method, bias, conscious intentionality, self-reflexivity, judgment, commitment, tertium comparationis, comparands.

Nowadays it is finally recognized—at least in the field of humanities and thanks to the works of such figures as Alasdair MacIntyre, Paul F. Knitter, and Nicholas Rescher—that the scholar’s subjectivity and personal commitments are an “unavoidable consequence” of humankind’s general “epistemic situation.”<sup>1</sup> All things equal, those scholars who admit the operation of implicit personal preferences in their scholarship are assumed to stand better chances of correcting the results of their scholarship and of more efficiently contextualizing themselves.<sup>2</sup> This long overdue recognition of the principality of the scholarly subject and the inevitability of at least some degree of their personal commitment to their subject matter is an invigorating development for theology as an academic discipline. This same development, however, urges further scholarly reflection on how the scholar’s inherent orientation toward certain values might play out in terms of the methodology of comparative theological enterprise. Hence the importance of the ideas of two important modern thinkers: Oliver Freiberger, who is a comparative methodologist and a historian of religion at the University of Texas at Austin, and Bernard Lonergan (d. 1984), who was a Transcendental Neo-Thomist philosopher and highlighted the quintessential role of method in theology’s self-mediation to modern society. The methodologies of Lonergan and Freiberger broadly converge when it comes to their focus on the importance of the role of the scholar’s agency in the process of the production of knowledge and description of the scholar’s cognitive operations. Even if Lonergan’s discourse on methodology tackles comparison between religious traditions rather *en passant*, it does allow one to explicitly engage such thorny comparativist questions as, “Does comparison tell us about how things really are?”, “Are the conclusions of comparison indeed worthwhile?”, or “What is the ultimate goal of comparison?” The article will thus demonstrate how Freiberger’s understanding of comparison between religious traditions as the scholar’s merely descriptive and classificatory activity may be significantly revised and extended in light of Lonergan’s notion of cognitive heuristics universally inherent in any human consciousness. Further, the article will also argue that any coherent methodical comparison cannot but touch upon the question of objective truth and ultimate value, i.e., the very structure of human conscious intentionality invariably promotes the content of any

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1 Kristin Beise Kiblinger, “Relating Theology of Religions and Comparative Theology,” in *The New Comparative Theology: Interreligious Insights from the Next Generation*, ed. Francis X. Clooney (New York: Bloomsbury Academic & Professional, 2010), 31.

2 Kiblinger, “Relating Theology,” 31.

descriptive and classificatory categories into a higher viewpoint of one's critical understanding and responsible deliberation.

Methodologically, this paper will start with brief descriptions of these two thinkers' methods. It will proceed to juxtapose them; then it will rectify the category of "method" in light of the ensuing insights and attempt at providing an integrated understanding.

### **Freiberger's Method: A Brief Description**

Freiberger's account of method can be deemed philosophical as it grapples with various objections to the very idea of comparison between religious traditions raised by postcolonial and postmodern approaches.<sup>3</sup> His methodological framework, however, is predominantly "descriptive" and "sketches" the way comparison is done "in practice" to help "analyze and refine" the way comparisons are produced in the study of religion. Freiberger's differentiation of the operations of comparative research and his identification of the relevant choices that the comparativist makes allows him, nonetheless, to envision comparison less as a merely "intuitive act" and more as an "organized and controlled operation,"<sup>4</sup> one that is able to sort out what an aspiring comparativist would want to do to avoid any "potential pitfalls" and do her job in a responsible way.<sup>5</sup> According to Francis X. Clooney, Freiberger was able to show how one of the effective methods in the study of religion can be the actual workings of comparison itself. He demonstrated that it is possible, through one's focus on the actual practice of one's comparison, to "identify and isolate specific methodical problems, effectively confront wholesale criticism, and find opportunities to refine the methodology."<sup>6</sup> Freiberger has thus done scholars the great service of discussing in detail what comparativists actually do in their research. He establishes that the focus on the very practice of comparison allows one at least to start moving beyond the current debates about comparison and the associated charges of inordinate generalization, decontextualization,

3 Robert A. Yelle, "Chastening and Disciplining Comparison: Bruce Lincoln and Oliver Freiberger on the Comparative Method in the Study of Religion," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 32 (2020), 485.

4 Oliver Freiberger, *Considering Comparison: A Method for Religious Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 166.

5 Freiberger, *Considering Comparison*, 114.

6 Francis X. Clooney, "Reading Religiously across Religious Borders: A Method for Comparative Study," *Religions* 9, no. 2 (2018), not paginated.

and essentialization.<sup>7</sup> According to Thomas Jurczyk, Freiburger’s main contribution is thus that he has elaborated a methodological framework that serves as a bridge between comparative practice and theoretical reflections.<sup>8</sup>

For Freiburger, comparative method is necessarily “second-order” because any comparison engages the scholarly results achieved by the relevant branches of sciences and humanities and because these results are always an outcome of certain relevant methods, such as philological textual criticism or social-scientific quantitative analysis.<sup>9</sup> The comparativist needs a discourse on comparative method to facilitate for herself the process of decision-making throughout the comparative process.<sup>10</sup> That is, any comparativist makes decisions regarding the configuration of study in terms of its “mode,” “scale,” and “scope”; it is also the comparativist’s decisions that determine how she proceeds through the “selection” of the compared objects, their “description,” and their “juxtaposition.” Hence it is this consequent set of decisions that methodically configures any comparative study.<sup>11</sup>

The “modes” of a study are its reflected goals. Earlier works in the comparative study of religion, broadly speaking, emphasized either description and particularity or explanation and generality. Freiburger calls the styles of those in the first group “ethnographic” and/or “encyclopaedic.” The “ethnographic” style (*à la* Herodotus) focuses on the immense amount of details, veering toward particularism and relying on intuition, coincidental associations, or the information available at the time about another culture. For Freiburger, this style lacks a structured framework and solid empirical foundation, failing to establish meaningful generalizations. The “encyclopaedic” style (like that of Gerard van der Leeuw or Friedrich Heiler) focuses on “contextless lists of strange things done by strange people in strange lands.” Freiburger calls the style of those in the second group “morphological” and/or “evolutionary.” The “morphological” style focuses on “archetypal” entities from which everything else derives (as is the case with the “perennialism” of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Houston Smith, Mircea Eliade, and others) while the “evolutionary” style reduces all phenomena to a linear evolutionary pattern; sometimes, the

7 Clooney, “Reading Religiously across Religious Borders.”

8 Jurczyk, Thomas. “Considering Comparison: A Method for Religious Studies, written by Oliver Freiburger,” *Journal of Religion in Europe* 12, no. 2 (2019): 217.

9 Freiburger, *Considering Comparison*, 113.

10 Freiburger, *Considering Comparison*, 111.

11 Oliver Freiburger, “Elements of a Comparative Methodology in the Study of Religion,” *Religions* 38 (2018): 11.

“evolutionary” style combines with the morphological to place each datum ahistorically vis-à-vis the similar datum (like, for instance, in classifying living indigenous peoples as “primitives”).<sup>12</sup> Freiberger is suspicious of each of the aforementioned “goals” or “styles,” thinking that they fail to “balance the particular and the general.”<sup>13</sup> He prefers to focus on his own two “modes” or “styles” that he claims to be “omnipresent” in any comparative scholarship and “promising for the academic study of religion,” viz., “illuminative” and “taxonomic.” The illuminative understands a particular historical datum in light of insights yielded by its comparison with a parallel datum. The taxonomic explores how a general aspect of a religious tradition relates to the “similar and yet distinct manifestations of that aspect” of another religious tradition without any reference to ahistorical archetypes and on the presupposition that the generalities be “modifiable abstractions.”<sup>14</sup>

Freiberger’s first operation of comparison is the scholar’s “selection” of the two or more “objects” or “units” of comparison (that is, “comparands”) and the *tertium comparationis* (the “third of comparison” or the aspect with respect to which one wishes to compare the units). The comparativist faces her most daunting task in this initial operation, as all subsequent comparative endeavors hinge on her precise delineation of the entities being compared and her concentration on a specific attribute assumed to be shared by both comparands.<sup>15</sup>

“Selection” also determines the “scale” and “scope” of comparison.<sup>16</sup> The “scale” of comparison is the level to which the study “zooms in” in terms of the particular features of its object, ranging from “micro-scale” (for example, studying parallel ways of worship within religious traditions) to “macro-scale” (for example, studying religious traditions as wholes).<sup>17</sup> In Freiberger’s view, even macro-comparative studies “can be done responsibly” as long as the “scholar resists the temptation to draw conclusions that transgress the limits of the selected scale and essentialize the issue at hand.”<sup>18</sup> The “scope,” in turn, defines potential relations between the items under comparison, such as “contextual” (that is, culture-internal and local),

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12 Freiberger, *Considering Comparison*, 116–121.

13 Freiberger, *Considering Comparison*, 123.

14 Freiberger, *Considering Comparison*, 125–29.

15 Oliver Freiberger, “Comparison Considered: Some Methodological Responses,” *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 32 (2020), 497.

16 Freiberger, *Considering Comparison*, 151.

17 Freiberger, *Considering Comparison*, 138–43.

18 Freiberger, “Comparison Considered,” 503.

“cross-cultural” (that is, universal and supra-regional), and “trans-historical” (that is, between different time periods).<sup>19</sup>

For Freiberger, it is the comparative scholar who identifies the comparands and the *tertium* based on the object of her academic and non-academic interest, the limits of her material sources, individual gender, race, or class configuration, life experience, moral and political convictions, career hopes, and even chance.<sup>20</sup> As a result, her “cultural bias” affects her academic interests, as the comparatist might choose those research paradigms and theoretical frameworks that have an imprint of her culture or other cultures.<sup>21</sup> When it comes to the *tertium*, too, the comparatist acts not entirely of her own accord but rather in accordance with the presumption or assertion of a certain relation between the units—a relation that is necessarily based on some theory as a higher level of the units’ organization. Any suggested *tertium* (and the units) is thus already a fruit of a loose prior connection between the units operative in the “prelude” of the comparative work; to some extent, “pre-comparative” is always “post-comparative,” drawing on a “surreptitiously sedimented stock” of concepts present both in the comparatist’s own culture and the foreign culture she studied.<sup>22</sup> Thus, even if the comparatist, thanks to the inrush of fresh insights, can modify the comparands and/or *tertium* during the process of comparison, “selection” is the least transparent of all the operations.<sup>23</sup>

In this regard, the solution that Freiberger envisions for the issue of personal and cultural biases is that the terms of the units and the *tertium* need “an explicit scholarly description that is subjected to the control of academic discourse.”<sup>24</sup> Since the comparatist organizes comparands around a higher theoretical viewpoint that underlies her choice of the *tertium*, he or she must proceed “self-reflexively” and “responsibly,” actively exploring her personal and cultural biases in a way that makes her academic work “transparent” to her peers. The scholar is thus to ultimately share the decisions that she makes in her study with a larger academic community.<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, since all comparands are “claims”—that is, fruits of a conscious and/or unconscious preliminary selection by the comparatist in

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19 Freiberger, *Considering Comparison*, 143–44.

20 Freiberger, *Considering Comparison*, 82–83, 96.

21 Freiberger, *Considering Comparison*, 99.

22 Freiberger, *Considering Comparison*, 152.

23 Freiberger, *Considering Comparison*, 152.

24 Freiberger, *Considering Comparison*, 101.

25 Freiberger, *Considering Comparison*, 110–11.

view of some *tertium*—the comparativist needs to describe how the datum came to be accepted as “significant for the purpose of argument”; that is, she needs to define its “local significance.”<sup>26</sup> This operation is called “description” and based on analysis of existing scholarly literature and relevant conceptualizations. While “description” aims at a “better analytical understanding of a particular historical-empirical datum,”<sup>27</sup> it remains intertwined with “selection,” for it is again the comparativist who decides which compounds to select. In fact, the process “reaches back to pre-selection phase, and the selection process might well continue when more about the items is known,” underscoring the features that are most germane for comparison. Further, “description” delineates the relation between the empirical and theoretical aspects of the comparands. That is, for Freiburger, apart from a tangible, “empirical” meaning to any comparand (that is, its having a concrete historical existence), there is also “theoretical” and “axiological” meaning thereto, one to which every comparativist consciously or unconsciously subscribes through her partaking of existent cultural values.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, the “theoretical” meanings provide a measure of decontextualization “inevitable” for any description, since it is impossible to represent the entirety of its particular aspects and in view of the totality of its context, so one always has to “delimit a comparand from its context.”<sup>29</sup>

“Juxtaposition” is the next operation, aiming at “detecting and analyzing the similarities and differences” of the compared items with regard to the *tertium*; as such, it is the key operation of a comparative study.<sup>30</sup> Should the comparativist focus on the similarities, what results is a “taxonomic” mode of study, for this focus will contribute to an understanding of the common class of which the compared items are particular cases. The focus on the differences, in contrast, will gain the item under comparison a sharper profile, thus yielding an “illuminative” mode of study. Inwardly, however, “juxtaposition” remains related to “selection,” as it “reaches all the way back to the pre-comparative phase of the selection process,” in which the comparands were already “preliminarily” juxtaposed in the comparativist’s mind as she searched for appropriate comparands with which to proceed.<sup>31</sup>

“Redescription,” unlike the previous operations, is “not inherent in all comparisons”; it directly applies, nonetheless, to the illuminative mode

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26 Freiburger, *Considering Comparison*, 91, 153.

27 Freiburger, “Comparison Considered,” 506.

28 Freiburger, *Considering Comparison*, 86.

29 Freiburger, “Comparison Considered,” 503.

30 Freiburger, *Considering Comparison*, 156.

31 Freiburger, *Considering Comparison*, 157.

of the comparative study as an act of enriched, “fresh historical-empirical description of a certain item” in light of insights that were gained during juxtaposition. It results in a new description of the comparand which is more refined or more comprehensive. Redescription will thus “register what has been learned,”<sup>32</sup> contributing to the “progress in scholarship that has been made as a result of the comparative study.”<sup>33</sup>

The final operation, “rectification and theory formation,” is different from “redescription” in that it does not deal with the analysis of historical-empirical items in their object-linguistic context; it rather re-defines and re-conceptualizes the (meta-linguistic) categories that the study deployed. For Freiburger, “every comparison has an in-built function of rectifying categories, even if this is not the primary goal of a particular study.”<sup>34</sup> That is, “rectification and theory formation” refines the comprehensive phenomenon of which one’s particular case study was an example, by re-naming it, which corresponds to the “taxonomic” mode of comparison.<sup>35</sup> Its ability to refine existing (meta-linguistic) categories is such that its results might comprise complex theoretical formations; potentially, it can even lead the comparativists to the “construction of a new theory of religion.”<sup>36</sup> For Freiburger, if one refuses to develop metalinguistic categories, any cross-cultural comparison will “yield the same expectable and uninspiring result: a long list of observed differences.”<sup>37</sup>

The last chapter of Freiburger’s book *Considering Comparison: A Method for Religious Studies* (2019), titled “Discourse Comparison: An Approach and a Case Study,” showcases his deployment of his own method for his post-doctoral work that compared asceticism in Buddhist and Christian late antique texts: the Saṃnyāsa Upaniṣads and the Apophthegmata (Maxims of the Fathers). As Freiburger states, his work pursued the taxonomic goal of rectifying the metalinguistic term “asceticism.” Interestingly, instead of comparing individual items, Freiburger finds it more “interesting and productive” to compare the “discourses” of which those items are subjects.<sup>38</sup> He deploys the term “discourse” both in the narrow Foucauldian sense of “situations in which the existing sources reflect a diversity of opinions but are silent about the ways in which the religious actors dealt with this

32 Freiburger, *Considering Comparison*, 158.

33 Freiburger, *Considering Comparison*, 158.

34 Freiburger, *Considering Comparison*, 107.

35 Freiburger, *Considering Comparison*, 159.

36 Freiburger, *Considering Comparison*, 160.

37 Freiburger, “Comparison Considered,” 500.

38 Freiburger, *Considering Comparison*, 172.



diversity” and the broader sense of “body of statements, analysis, opinions, etc., relating to a particular domain of intellectual or social activity, esp. as characterized by recurring themes, concepts, or values.”<sup>39</sup> Freiberger’s own comparison thus operates on the hypothesis that every aspect of religion is “potentially contested and the subject of the discourse.”<sup>40</sup> Any failure on the part of scholars of religion to study the “discourse” would mean that they make a “value judgment about the ‘right’ or most relevant interpretation of the issue in question” and hereby silence dissenting voices.<sup>41</sup> Further, in Freiberger’s view, any “higher truths” claimed by religious actors themselves are “simply not verifiable” with the empirical methods utilized by scholars of religion. What is verifiable empirically is merely the fact “that different, often contradictory positions exist that purport to be divine truth,” which renders the discipline of religious studies “not in the business of passing a value judgement” regarding the falsity or validity of all truth claims; its scholars are interested rather in the “diversity itself.”<sup>42</sup>

Freiberger’s comparison of the “discourses” in the two texts concludes that ascetic practices may be identified as an “extraordinary variant” of an “existing cultural technique”—that is, variations of existing cultural contexts. Even if some related practices (like, for instance, ascetics’ roaming around totally naked) might be deemed as “extraordinary” and “courageous,” they are still subjects of the existing discourse, such that the boundary between what to consider ascetic or non-ascetic “cannot be answered universally.”<sup>43</sup> Freiberger claims to have contributed to existing scholarship by refining and complexifying the category of asceticism, namely, by his adding to its existent general definition as “practices of self-restraint” the qualifier “at least some of which are viewed extraordinary in the respective cultural context.”<sup>44</sup> That is, Freiberger concludes that it is the context of the “asceticism discourse” that defines which practices are “ascetic” in a given culture or which intensity they should possess to be considered as such. However, one wonders if the very notion of the culturally constructed “discourse” that Freiberger presumes is able to yield any different conclusion. Apart from this circularity, one also wonders why and how any ascetic practise would at all count as genuinely “extraordinary” if it is invariably pre-conditioned by the already existing, and hence more or less already accepted, cultural

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39 Freiberger, *Considering Comparison*, 169–70.

40 Freiberger, *Considering Comparison*, 170.

41 Freiberger, *Considering Comparison*, 171.

42 Freiberger, *Considering Comparison*, 169.

43 Freiberger, *Considering Comparison*, 192.

44 Freiberger, *Considering Comparison*, 193.

context? Finally, one wonders if Freiburger’s somewhat one-sided focus on “discourse” does not prevent him from attending to features that can be potentially cross-cultural. For instance, it remains unclear why cannot nakedness, as a practice of renunciation by an ascetic of the last remnants of her worldliness, point to a possible cross-cultural ideal of ascetic nakedness? Freiburger briefly mentions that the existence of this practice across the two traditions does illuminate the way asceticism can be perceived.<sup>45</sup> Nonetheless, he never elaborates upon the way this or any other illumination results in the formation of theoretical generalization(s) about certain religious phenomena—something he claims his method is capable of.<sup>46</sup>

Furthermore, Freiburger envisages that any theory of religion, developed as it could be, should keep itself at arm’s length from things divine—that is, theology. For Freiburger, (comparative) theology is an “entirely different” discourse that only “appears” to belong to religious studies. Even if the present-day comparative (Catholic) theology (as exemplified mainly by Clooney) tends to suspend “decisions about which religion is ‘right,’”<sup>47</sup> its proper field remains distinct from that of religious studies. To illustrate this difference, Freiburger speaks of the comparative theologian Michelle Voss’s book *Dualities: A Theology of Difference* (2010). Freiburger praises her “careful and contextual approach” to writings of two female medieval theologians, which she compares. However, he also mentions that comparative religionists would want to see this comparison yield a “more theoretical take on religion,” as well as showing his reservations regarding the fact that the conclusions of the study reflect constructive theology. That is, he presumes Voss’s conceptualizations of divinity in her study as “fluid” or “not fluid” as value-laden and hence lying “outside the analytical confines of religious studies.”<sup>48</sup> For him, the “ultimate goal” of comparison in comparative theology is a better analytical understanding not of “religion” but of

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45 Freiburger, *Considering Comparison*, 191.

46 Freiburger, *Considering Comparison*, 160. Yelle, too, notices that Freiburger “does not address sufficiently the potential contradictions between a strong form of discourse analysis and the comparative method,” the former precluding even generic truth-statements and arguing that all one has access to is the “way in which a particular discursive community talks about and thereby constructs its objects.” Yelle is worried that, if pursued strictly, such an approach may make impossible any “truly” cross-cultural study concerning such metalinguistic categories as asceticism or sacred kingship (Yelle, “Chastening and Disciplining Comparison,” 486).

47 Freiburger, *Considering Comparison*, 41.

48 Freiburger, *Considering Comparison*, 42.

the “divine” and of what is related to it.<sup>49</sup> Citing J. Fredericks, he deems comparative theology as “rooted within Christian tradition” and aiming at thinking about Christianity “in new ways” rather than studying “religion in general” or even gaining “new insights” about other religious traditions. Thus, in his view, the aims of (comparative) theology go beyond the “illuminative” and “taxonomic” goals proper to comparative religion.<sup>50</sup>

Needless to say, most comparative theologians would disagree with Freiberger’s somewhat parochial focus on Fredericks’ assumption that they are uninterested in insights regarding other traditions or think exclusively in Christian terms. John Thatamanil, for instance, contends that comparative theologians “engage specific texts, motifs and claims of particular traditions not only to understand better these traditions but also to *determine* the truth of theological matters through conversation and collaboration.”<sup>51</sup> Another prominent comparative theologian Keith Ward talks about comparative theology not as a “form of apologetics for a particular faith but as an intellectual discipline which enquires into ideas of ultimate value and goal of human life, as they have been perceived and expressed in a variety of religious traditions.”<sup>52</sup> Moreover, Catherine Cornille speaks about departments of theology “in some cases becoming departments of religious studies, and the boundaries between the two disciplines at times fading.”<sup>53</sup> She also adds that the present-day “historians of religions have come to duly recognize their own normative biases, while comparative theologians at times refrain from explicit normative statements or conclusions.”<sup>54</sup> In this regard, she agrees with Hugh Nicholson who states that, “as scholars of religion begin to recognize that the nontheological study of religion is grounded in a set of normative commitments, commitments, moreover that are not inherently inimical to those of theology, the disciplinary boundary between

49 Not all scholars find Freiberger’s abrupt distinction between such comprehensive notions as “religion” and “divine” as particularly helpful. For instance, Craig Prentiss describes Freiberger’s application of the words “religion” and “religious” as “slippery” and lacking explication (Craig R. Prentiss, “The Comparative Method in the Study of Religion and Race: A Reflection on Lincoln and Freiberger,” *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 32 (2020), 437).

50 Freiberger, *Considering Comparison*, 44.

51 J. Thatamanil, *The Immanent Divine: God, Creation, and the Human Predicament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006) in Catherine Cornille, *Meaning and Method in Comparative Theology* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2020), 3, emphasis Cornille’s.

52 K. Ward, *Religion and Revelation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 40, in Cornille, *Meaning and Method*, 3.

53 Cornille, *Meaning and Method*, 5.

54 Cornille, *Meaning and Method*, 9–10.

religious studies and theology becomes considerably less clear-cut, and indeed more arbitrary, than previously presumed.”<sup>55</sup>

Freiberger, however, does not claim that his proposed approach is the only way to go, recognizing that an “entirely different model might focus, for example, more on the intuition of the scholar and explore how exactly this intuition works, how it is developed.”<sup>56</sup> So, it is to the ideas of the Christian theologian, methodologist, and philosopher Bernard Lonergan, who had a great deal to say about cognition and epistemology, that we now turn.

### **Lonergan’s Method: A Brief Description**

Lonergan’s so-called “Transcendental Method” accommodates the philosophical turn to the subject, inaugurated by Descartes, in a nuanced way. Admittedly, one’s viewpoint on any issue cannot venture beyond one’s subjective viewpoint; however, if one explores, as Lonergan does in the first ten chapters of his fundamental work *Insight*, the actual workings of any human intentional consciousness, one sees these workings invariably reflect a fundamental universal phenomenon and four concomitant intentional operations. That is, any human intentionality (and that of comparative scholars, of course) is always driven by an inherently disinterested and virtually unrestricted desire to apprehend the whole Universe of being in all its facets, a desire that corresponds to Aristotle’s sense of “wonder” so peculiar to all humans. This principal “wonder” unfolds in, and as, the knower’s four intentional “operations” (or “levels” of conscious intentionality). The first is one’s perception of the empirical data of the world (for example, tactile and visual objects) and of the data of one’s consciousness (for example, memories, perceived images). The second is one’s understanding of this data by answering (implicitly or explicitly) the question, “What is it?” The third is one’s judging the veracity of one’s understanding by one’s implicit or explicit answering—affirmatively or negatively—the question for critical reflection “Is it really so?” Finally, the fourth “level” is that of one’s decision or committing oneself to some course of action as regards that which one has affirmed to be real; it is fulfilled

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55 Hugh Nicholson, “The Reunification of Theology and Comparison in the New Comparative Theology,” 635, in Catherine Cornille, “The Problem of Choice in Comparative Theology,” in *How to Do Comparative Theology*, ed. Francis X. Clooney, Klaus von Stosch, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2020), 20.

56 Cited in Clooney, “Reading Religiously Across Religious Borders”: 4.

by one's attempt to practically deliver on one's positive implicit or explicit answer to the question, "Is it worthwhile?"<sup>57</sup>

It is the operation of "judging," for Lonergan, that leads the knowing subject to transcend the confines of her subjectivity toward what is affirmed as real. That is, once the knowing subject critically grasps that the condition of the sufficiency of the relevant evidence is fulfilled, she naturally proceeds to judge that something *actually* is (or not) "so" independent of her subjective experiencing and understanding. The very notion of "evidence" is operant here, presupposing that there be an impersonal element to judging.<sup>58</sup> Lonergan claims that his account of conscious intentionality is so integral to the very structure of human cognition that one's denying it would only confirm it—that is, one would have to understand this account as a data and then proceed to make a negative judgment regarding its veracity, thus would act in accordance with the account which one denies.<sup>59</sup> In other words, such self-referential inconsistency can be only averted if the knower recognizes that, at the moment of judging, she comes to possess—at least within her concrete cognitive parameters and her unique historical context—an "absolute objectivity" (what her judgment affirms to be true) as opposed to what Lonergan calls "experiential objectivity" (what is perceived empirically) and to what he calls "normative objectivity" (what is understood hypothetically).<sup>60</sup> To put it in yet another way, the thrust of inquisitive wonder inherent in the knower's intelligence organizes her mind in a way

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- 57 John Dadosky, *The Structure of Religious Knowing: Encountering the Sacred in Eliade and Lonergan* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2004), 46–49. In the first ten chapters of *Insight*, Lonergan provides an extended survey of how knowing operates in the fields of one's experiential, intelligible, and rational awareness, with a view to demonstrating to the reader, through copious concrete examples from science and mathematics, that insights are indeed produced in the sequence of the antecedent questions. By Chapter XI, the reader is expected to have self-appropriated (that is, have understood and verified) this demonstrated method *by* herself—not the way one learns a theory but the way one knows what walking is—that is, by actually performing it.
- 58 In Lonergan's taxonomy, another way to refer to "judgment" is to say that it arises when all relevant questions for the knower to pursue with regard to a particular object are answered, i.e. when her inquiry comes to a term.
- 59 Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, ed. Frederick E. Crow and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2017), 22.
- 60 Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, edited by Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran. Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1992, 355–56. Indeed, what is known to be real-as-affirmed-by-judgment exists independently of its knower in the same sense as, for instance, the *objectivity* of Caesar crossing the Rubicon at a certain date exists *in* the mind of a professional historian. Since this

that introduces what is particular and general only to promote the resultant intelligibility unto the further level of the real-as-grasped-in-one’s judgment. Crucially, for Lonergan, since all intelligibility (or insight) results from empirical data or the data of one’s consciousness that are always only partial and open to revision, all intelligibility, too, is always open to revision; the only element not open to revision is the structure of conscious intentionality itself.<sup>61</sup> This is the radical sense in which Lonergan re-formulates the traditional scholastic motto “truth is formally found only in judgment” (*veritas formaliter est in solo iudicio*).<sup>62</sup>

Furthermore, Lonergan adds that one’s sense of objectivity may be distorted by one’s succumbing to bias. According to him, one’s disinterested desire to wonder about things in an unrestricted manner might be frustrated by one or several of the following four biases, each of them being a block or distortion of one’s intellectual and moral development. The first bias is “dramatic” and informed by psychic aberrations or psychic underdevelopment caused by subconscious “psychic wounds.”<sup>63</sup> The second bias is “individual;” that is, it is caused by a self-centeredness that does not allow for even a minimal measure of self-abnegation needed for the maintenance of the common good. The third bias is “collective;” that is, it “favors what is best for the group at the expense of others outside the group.” The fourth bias is the “general bias of common sense”—one that disregards a good theory only because it does not seem of immediate practical benefit.<sup>64</sup>

Thus, for Lonergan, the sense of wonder and the structure of conscious intentionality leads any human being (and comparativists, of course) to

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fact exists independently, she can more or less easily assert its validity to any other person by providing her evidence.

61 Lonergan, *Method*, 22.

62 Elizabeth A. Morelli and Mark D. Morelli, *The Lonergan Reader* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 422.

63 John R. Friday, “Critical Realism as a Philosophical Foundation for Interreligious Dialogue: Examining the Proposal of Bernard Lonergan,” *Philosophy and Theology* 24, 1 (2012), 128; Dadosky, *Structure*, 129.

64 Lonergan, *Insight*, 242–53. What Lonergan means by “common sense” is his antipode of the “world of theory”: if the latter *explains* the way things are related one to another, the former merely *describes* the way things relate—directly and concretely—to the knower herself (for example, the concrete world of her practical living and ordinary language, her entourage, culture, places, etc.; it is also an accumulation of insights into particular situations enduring in the collective memory of particular communities. It also may be insights that do not have bearing on, or draw upon, a theory (Dadosky, *The Structure*, 52).

heuristically presuppose the existence of something true and authentic in the ways of other human beings, anticipating a possible “integrated understanding” between them.<sup>65</sup> Hence, once transposed to the level of intercultural interaction, Lonergan’s system would regard any differences between religions, cultures, or any other objects of comparison, as either “complementary” (reconcilable within a higher synthesis) or “genetic” (i.e. reconcilable as successive developmental stages), or “dialectic” (that is, irreconcilable).<sup>66</sup> One’s refusal to explore irreducible, dialectical differences with a view to transcending them to a higher viewpoint normally signals that one’s thinking is thwarted by one or several of the aforementioned biases.<sup>67</sup> The genuine “objectivity” in this sense becomes one’s “authentic subjectivity.”<sup>68</sup> That is, for Lonergan, one’s wonder about any entity, as long as it is unclouded by bias, cannot but bring one to the realization that *whatever* one’s attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, and responsibility designate as true and good is so *authentically*.<sup>69</sup> In contrast, insofar as one follows, instead of what is authentically true and good, a “calculus of the pleasures and pains,” errors, false rationalizations, and ideologies, one “withdraws” from authenticity into inauthenticity, alienating oneself from one’s true “self.”

Furthermore, in *Method in Theology*, Lonergan implements the operations of conscious intentionality to successive “sets” of operations, or “tasks,” directed to interdependent yet distinct ends immanent in the theologian’s handling of any data and the results that these data yield. What ensues is the eightfold functional specialization, which Lonergan applies primarily to theology, but which, on closer analysis, is also applicable to any field of humanities and social sciences.<sup>70</sup> The first four “tasks” handle the data

65 Dadosky, *The Structure*, 38.

66 John Dadosky and Christian Krokus, “What Are Comparative Theologians Doing When They Are Doing Comparative Theology? A Lonerganian Perspective with Examples from the Engagement with Islam,” *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 32, no. 1 (2022): 75.

67 Dadosky, *The Structure*, 35, 38.

68 Lonergan, *Method*, 248.

69 Lonergan, *Method*, 247.

70 According to Vernon Gregson, a Lonergan scholar, “Just as the four levels of consciousness... apply to everything we might attend to, understand, verify, and decide about, so the eight functional specialties apply to every creation and construction of human meaning, in all historical and pre-historical places and times.... Their application to religion is simply a specific example of their general relevance to all fields in which human meaning is the subject matter” (Vernon Gregson, *Desires of the Human Heart: an Introduction to the Theology of Bernard Lonergan* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 79-80).

which the scholar finds mediated to her by her cultural or religious tradition: research (into the data), interpretation (understanding the data’s “what-ness”), history/verification (judging interpretation’s veracity), and dialectic/philosophy (revealing the ongoing values of what was verified or lack thereof). An additional four “tasks” are that which the scholar mediates to her cultural or religious tradition: foundations/ethics (her basic personal existential orientation), doctrines/social policies (her reasonable affirmation of this orientation in relation to other human beings), systematics/social policies (her intelligent elucidation of the aforementioned affirmation in relation to other human beings), and communications/social action (popularizing, by one’s words and deeds, that which one has elucidated).<sup>71</sup> The universal applicability of these sets is based on their “mirroring” the four operations of conscious intentionality: research and communications/social action are mainly realized via the relevant sense of “empirical objectivity” (one’s attentiveness to the data), interpretation and systematic/social policies via “normative objectivity” (one’s theoretical grasp of the data), history/verification and doctrines/policies via “absolute objectivity” (one’s rational grasp of the data), and dialectic/philosophy and foundations/ethics via the sense of what is valuable (one’s existential stance in relation to that which one has judged to be true).<sup>72</sup>

Comparison (the scholar’s search for commonalities and differences) is most precisely located, in Lonergan’s methodology, at the functional specialties “dialectics/philosophy” and “foundation/ethics”—the specialties which are accomplished by the fourth, axiological operation (or “level”) of intentional consciousness. If “dialectics/philosophy” mainly reveals the differences, “foundations/ethics” engages the differences more deeply from a presupposition of a unity based on the natural and supra-natural aspects of human living, namely, Lonergan’s “Transcendental Method” and Lonergan’s notion of “being-in-love with God in an unrestricted manner” as a possibility of one’s “genuine transcendent encounter” with the sacred.<sup>73</sup> The idea of this supra-natural “encounter” is based on Lonergan’s conviction that any “authentic” form of religiosity is probably a spinoff of one’s experience of being-in-love with God in an unrestricted manner, i.e., one’s being grasped by ultimate concern.<sup>74</sup> Lonergan also believed that the empirical data accumulated by the historians of religion as to the supposedly universal experience of the holy across different religious traditions could potentially

71 Gregson, *The Desires of the Human Heart*, 80–118.

72 Lonergan, *Method*, 132–135.

73 Dadosky and Krokus, “What Are Comparative Theologians Doing”: 69.

74 Lonergan, *Method*, 102.



ground a universalist view of religion. He was especially intrigued by the ideas of Friedrich Heiler (d. 1967), a German theologian and historian of religion who highlighted seven areas of commonality among the world's religious traditions: 1) the affirmation of a transcendent reality; 2) the immanence of the transcendent reality within human hearts; 3) the existence of the transcendent reality as ground of value, truth, and beauty; 4) the existence of the transcendent reality as love and compassion; 5) an emphasis on self-sacrifice and purgation for the spiritual life; 6) the importance of love and service to others; 7) love as the superior way to the transcendent reality.<sup>75</sup>

At the same time, Lonergan's Transcendental Method seems immune to post-modern and post-colonial accusations against the "transcendentalist" approach to the history of religions adopted by such historians of religion as Heiler or Eliade and oftentimes accused of being a form of pseudo-theology that explains away the numerous manifestations of religiosity across cultures as variegated human responses to some transcultural "sacred" or "ultimate" reality.<sup>76</sup> Apart from recognizing, to all human beings, the ability to seek answers to a set of consecutive generic questions, the Transcendental Method hardly presumes premediated universal comparative patterns. If it happens to affirm the occurrence of at least some of them, it does so tentatively and within certain historical contexts, using these patterns as tools to disclose specific differences and similarities and to promote inquiry for further investigation. The Transcendental Method thus acts as a generalized methodology of religious studies that pronounces on the validity or viability of the results of religious studies "not immediately and specifically," but rather "only remotely and generically."<sup>77</sup> Constantly keeping an eye on the particular, it will nonetheless engage encompassing theories about religion in general, for nothing should (and, in fact, nothing can) restrict the

75 Lonergan, *Method*, 105, in Dadosky, "Further Along the Fourth Stage," 73. In a similar vein, Lonergan approves of the works of William Johnston (d. 2010), an Irish-born Jesuit priest, a scholar of mysticism, and a Zen meditation advocate, who speaks about religious experience as one that is "common to East and West, morally uplifting, cosmic in orientation but, when interpreted, taking on the distinctiveness of diverse traditions" (Bernard Lonergan, "Prolegomena to the Study of the Emerging Religious Consciousness of Our Time," in *A Third Collection*, ed. Frederick E. Crow (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1985), 67).

76 See for instance Jonathan Z. Smith, "Are Theological and Religious Studies Compatible?" *Bulletin/CSSR* 26/3 (1997): 60, in Locklin and Nicholson, "The Return of Comparative Theology," 488.

77 Bernard Lonergan, "Philosophy and the Religious Phenomenon," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 12/2 (1994): 128.

inherently unrestricted desire of humans to wonder about everything.<sup>78</sup> What balances out both approaches is the authentic judgment of the researcher herself. According to Jim Kanaris, most Lonergan scholars agree that, while Lonergan did make use of Heiler’s theory of religion, he sought no common core to all religious traditions. Rather, his main concern was, “How the scholar approaches the phenomenon of religion ‘critically [and] self-consciously?’”<sup>79</sup> Indeed, in Kanaris’ view,

The dialectical *modus operandi* of [Lonergan’s] philosophy of religion is neither one of confronting religion scholars with a better understanding of their data, not one of providing better methods by which to understand their data. Rather, it is one of providing a basis for confronting in themselves the irrational that affects their so-called objective research every bit as much as it permeates the undertakings of the non-academic. In fact, it can be more insidious, hidden under the guise of objectivism.<sup>80</sup>

Accordingly, in his 1976 lecture on “Religious Studies and Theology,” Lonergan admits that whether the dynamic state of “being-in-love” is identical with religious experience pertinent to other traditions remains a “large and intricate question” exhibiting diversity and complexity, so to “seek generalization before one has tried to understand the particular” seems to

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78 According to Dadosky, “Approaches like Heiler’s have fallen out of favour as the study of religion has become much more empirically restricted in its methodology. ... However, one wonders: if biologists can come to certain agreements about commonalities in human anatomy and physiology, why would there not be commonalities among human religious experiences and values? After all, the Christian, the Muslim, and the Hindu are not members of different species, but human beings who for a complex of reasons have adopted, over history, different expressions of answers to the ultimate questions of transcendent value” (John Dadosky, *The Wisdom of Order: Engaging Lonergan’s Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2024), 107). Indeed, according to him, “Researchers and scholars in religious studies or theology who posit irreducible differences between the two disciplines are often operating from biased presuppositions” (Dadosky, *Structure*, 35).

79 Jim Kanaris, *Bernard Lonergan’s Philosophy of Religion: from Philosophy of God to Philosophy of Religious Studies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 112.

80 Kanaris, *Lonergan’s Philosophy of Religion*, 128.

him to be a “wrong method.”<sup>81</sup> Lonergan’s account of religious experience, basic as this experience is on his understanding of the individual and corporate dimensions of religious life, remains “tentative” in the sense of being his own scholarly “construct” or “ideal type.”<sup>82</sup>

## Lonergan and Freiberg: Methods Juxtaposed

### *The Balance between the Theoretical and the Empirical*

One propitious similarity between the two methods is their highlighting the importance of the theoretical aspect of both the comparands and comparison. Freiberg stresses the importance of the *tertium* as what makes juxtaposing “interesting and relevant” by stipulating its theoretical aspect as a superstructure or “meaningful whole” that organizes otherwise unorganized facts.<sup>83</sup> In other words, both draw attention to the fact that comparison as such can and should be theorized, as it is this theorization that allows the scholars to conduct comparisons in the first place. It also provides a means for decontextualization “inherent in comparison and thus, to a certain degree, epistemologically inevitable.”<sup>84</sup> For Lonergan, both description and explanation are the fruit of the operation of “understanding” and mainly correspond, in terms of the scholar’s “tasks,” to that of “interpretation.” All further operations of intentional consciousness and all further “tasks” proceed in the light of what has been intelligently described and explained.

Both thinkers would concur that the scholar would start the process of comparison by first carefully attending to the empirical given—that is, both historical-empirical items and (meta-linguistic) categories as found in the “larger pool” (Freiberg) or “public fund” (Lonergan) of common (cultural) values and popular opinions. These data will then come to belong to the scholar’s consciousness, and the ongoing sense of wonder (if unblocked by a bias) would lead her to process these data in an attempt to grasp some part of a “meaningful whole” or “unknown known” in the eureka moment of

81 Bernard Lonergan, “First Lecture: Religious Experience,” in *Third Collection*, 125, in Reid Locklin, “Toward an Interreligious Theology of Church: Revisiting Bernard Lonergan’s Contribution to the ‘Dialogue of Religions.’” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 43 (3) (2008): 399.

82 Kanaris, *Lonergan’s Philosophy of Religion*, 109.

83 Freiberg, *Considering Comparison*, 123.

84 Freiberg, “Comparison Considered,” 503.

“normative objectivity.” What one comes to intelligently understand then gets formulated, conceptualized, and generalized as an abstraction. It is this abstraction, according to Lonergan, that organizes the mind such that it stops passively “mirroring” the already existent items and introduces what is general, significant, and relevant.<sup>85</sup>

That is to say, Lonergan would agree with Freiberger that, at the pre-comparative stage, theory implied by the *tertium* exists as a “definition” within one’s own or someone else’s culture, having no “independent existence” and needing not to indicate anything “real.”<sup>86</sup> For Lonergan, all initial definitions and hypotheses reside—before they re-emerge in the acts of one’s intentional consciousness—in a “more rudimentary state,” as some unanalyzed structure or procedures; as such, they are operative within cognitional process as the given of merely “experiential objectivity” that is yet to be authenticated.<sup>87</sup> For Lonergan, these theoretical entities are given in a “larger context of beliefs”—the “acts of understanding first made by others” and “presuppositions” that one takes for granted because they are “commonly assumed”—not least because one has “neither the time nor the inclination nor perhaps the ability” to verify the enormous totality of these presuppositions for oneself.<sup>88</sup>

Further, for Freiberger, the explanation within the *tertium* functions as “heuristic devices” to be subsumed by the comparativist’s further operations—a position that is close to Lonergan’s account, who describes the operation of seeking understanding as “heuristic anticipation of the systematic.”<sup>89</sup> If method consists of “ordering means to achieve an end” and if this end is knowledge that is yet to be acquired, one can speak of the heuristic structure of knowing that would “name the unknown,” “work out its properties,” and use the latter to “direct, order, guide the inquiry.”<sup>90</sup> He also assimilates method (i.e., his cognitional theory) to an “upper blade” of a “pair of scissors” that cuts across a “lower blade” of data to yield a proper interpretation.<sup>91</sup> The latter, however, remains forever susceptible to revision due to the possibility of new concepts, categories, and conclusions arising in light of new data. In other words, rather than relying on some archetypical “truths” and received “self-evident facts,” “scissors” produce categories and

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85 Lonergan, *Insight*, 112-3.

86 Freiberger, *Considering Comparison*, 105.

87 Lonergan, *Insight*, 306.

88 Lonergan, *Method*, 42.

89 Lonergan, *Insight*, 137.

90 Lonergan, *Insight*, 68.

91 Lonergan, *Insight*, 600.

conclusions that are the authentic fruit of the operations of the scholar’s intentional consciousness vis-à-vis the ongoing stream of new data and concrete discoveries.

Hence, if Freiburger’s comparative method is “second-order” in the sense that it allows for, and actively deploys, different extrinsic methods (discourse analysis, content analysis, document analysis, philology, hermeneutics, surveys, etc.) as a primary means for the collection of the relevant data, Lonergan’s method, thanks to its universality, is both “first-order” and “second-order.” That is to say, while his method serves as a general framework of all human cognition, it postulates that its operations are always initiated by an influx of extrinsic data that itself might be a fruit of the scholar’s personal background, an outcome of some other methodical study, or anything else that empirically exists. Thus, when Freiburger says that comparative method opens a “new interpretive dimension that is beyond the scope of those [extrinsic] methods,”<sup>92</sup> Lonergan would possibly clarify that, in this case, what distinguishes the comparative method from other methods is that it necessarily thematizes and objectifies the data of those methods within some higher synthesis.

*The Primacy of Authenticity*

Both thinkers foreground the need for authenticity for the scholar to achieve by doing her utmost to exclude all bias. What Freiburger refers to as “personal” and “cultural” biases and one’s unconscious assumptions broadly correspond to Lonergan’s “individual,” “collective,” and “dramatic” biases respectively. For Lonergan, as long as individuals remain their “true selves” by making efforts to avoid biases and observe what he refers to as “Transcendental Precepts,” that is, “Be attentive,” “Be intelligent,” “Be reasonable,” and “Be responsible,” they are authentic in terms of their thoughts and actions.<sup>93</sup> That is, they find themselves driven to transcend all bias. This self-transcendence, however, is “ever precarious,” and any withdrawal from inauthenticity only highlights the need for a further one.<sup>94</sup> In a similar manner, Freiburger agrees with postmodern and postcolonial critics that “we should be ‘relentlessly self-conscious about our scholarly

92 Freiburger, *Considering Comparison*, 31.

93 Each Precept corresponds with the relevant level of conscious intentionality and the question it tackles (“What is it?” “Is it really so?” and so on).

94 Lonergan, *Method*, 106, 266.

interests’...and...about our personal affinities and aversions, about the various levels of our cultural frames of reference, and about our values.”<sup>95</sup>

*Comparison is the Sine Qua Non of What Scholars Do*

For both Lonergan and Freiburger, comparison is part-and-parcel of most acts of human understanding and interpretation. Freiburger describes comparison as a “fundamental characteristic of human intelligence” and an “omnipresent substructure of human thought.”<sup>96</sup> We compare things and classify them into categories all the time. By extension, comparison is inherent not only in comparative religion but also in any academic field. For instance, a philologist, a philosopher, or a historian will inevitably compare certain texts, their contents, languages, and so on. The scholar of religion looks at individual phenomena with what Freiburger refers to as “comparative gaze”—that is, within a perspective that realizes, explicitly or implicitly, that the particular under study is not unique in terms of its religious aspects and might be properly classified under some generic terms.<sup>97</sup> When one studies “religion,” a “highly comparative category all by itself, meant here as an abstract, encompassing term,” one cannot help using metalinguistic terms, so one inevitably compares. For Freiburger, “asking religious studies: ‘why compare?’ is like asking a person: ‘why breathe?’”<sup>98</sup>

Lonergan, in turn, does not speak so much about “comparison” *per se* as he does about “analogy,” the latter being a manifestation of the “law immanent and operative in cognitional process that similars are similarly understood,” according to which “there cannot be a difference in understanding the data” provided there is not a “significant difference in the data.”<sup>99</sup> For Lonergan, we “appeal to analogies and we generalize because we cannot help understanding similars similarly”; what is problematic here is not that one analogizes or assimilates but commits “generalizing on insufficient grounds” when the latter are “merely putative” and “further pertinent questions arise.”<sup>100</sup>

95 Freiburger, *Considering Comparison*, 101.

96 Freiburger, *Considering Comparison*, 21.

97 Freiburger, *Considering Comparison*, 24.

98 Freiburger, “Comparison Considered,” 506.

99 Lonergan, *Insight*, 313.

100 Lonergan, *Insight*, 313.

*Theology and Religious Studies: Different Disciplines?*

Perhaps the most prominent difference between these two thinkers, despite their avid interest in method, is surely the fact Lonergan is a philosophical theologian and Freiburger is a scholar of religion. If attainment of “absolute objectivity” and the subsequent commitment (or the theologian’s movement from the functional specialty “dialectics/philosophy” to “foundations/ethics”) are natural and organic in Lonergan’s system (provided one is authentic), Freiburger would caution that this move trespasses the proper field of comparative religion.

Lonergan, at the same time, would recognize the distinctive role of religious studies, saying that, when theologians “attempt to compare and relate other religions with their own,” they “are borrowing the techniques of the historian of religions” and that “without religious studies theologians are unacquainted with the religions of mankind.”<sup>101</sup> For him, religious studies scholars, so far from endeavoring to arbitrate between opposed religious convictions, commonly prefer to *describe* and *understand* [various religions’] rituals and symbols, their origins and distribution, their history and influence.<sup>102</sup> One might say that, for Lonergan, while the scholars of religion operate primarily on the level of “understanding,” (the task of interpretation), asking, “What is it?” “What is the data?” “What are the relations between the data on this religion and the data on other religions?”, the theologians supposedly operate on those of “judgement” and value-making (the tasks of history and foundations respectively), asking, with regard to religious claims, “Is it so?” and “Is it valuable?” Thus, according to Dadosky, “Historians of religions functioning as historians of religions do not take the extra step into foundations because this functional specialty establishes the religious horizon of faith and belief through religious, moral, and intellectual conversion.”<sup>103</sup> While both scholars of religion and theologians fulfill tasks ranging from that of “research” to that of “history/verification,” the (comparative) theologian’s sense of commitment to the truth and value of a tradition(s) (ideally) brings her to the further task of “foundations/ethics,” all her subsequent questions and actions flowing therefrom. One should not forget, however, that Lonergan had to differentiate, almost *à la* Freiburger, between “theology” and “history of

101 Bernard Lonergan, “Ongoing Genesis of Methods,” *A Third Collection*, 164, in Dadosky, *The Structure*, 35.

102 Lonergan, “Preface to Lectures,” *A Third Collection*, 113–4, in Dadosky, *The Structure*, 36.

103 Dadosky, *Structure*, 37.

religions,” because of what seemed at Lonergan’s time to be the almost predominantly secularist character of comparative study of religion (the then so-called “science of comparative religion”).<sup>104</sup> Even in doing so, Lonergan never loses sight of a comprehensive viewpoint, one that seeks the potential unity of all sciences and all social activities and anticipates the more recent existentialist insight that “religious” be deemed as representing what Paul Tillich called “ultimate concern” and what Thatamanil paraphrased as one’s “comprehensive qualitative orientation” of one’s whole being toward an ultimate value.<sup>105</sup> Indeed, Freiburger’s aforementioned emphasis on the far-reaching effects of the scholar’s personal and cultural biases on her research precludes, on Freiburger’s own terms, any talk of the Cartesian “objectivity” on the part of scholar of religion.

In contrast, the operation of “judgment” enjoys epistemological and even metaphysical primacy in Lonergan’s system. As was mentioned, one’s “judgment” determines the veracity of one’s understanding/ interpretation in a way that it becomes self-defeating for the knower to proclaim her judgments as merely “subjective,” for the relevant question, “Is it really so?” prescind, within the context unique to every concrete knower, from the importance of any temporal, spatial, historical, or cultural conditions.<sup>106</sup> One’s authentic subjectivity, while fully accepting its historical

104 At the time of Lonergan, the term “comparative theology” was understood as almost synonymous with “comparative religion,” “science of comparative religion,” or “science of religion” (Dadosky, *Structure*, 148). If one looks into the convoluted history of the relationship between “theology of religions,” “comparative religion,” and “comparative theology,” one sees that the Europocentric approach to study of various religious traditions prominent in the “liberal universalist” type of “comparative theology” in the nineteenth-century/ early twentieth-century (as represented by G. Matheson, J. A. MacCulloch, or F. Clarke) was superseded by the allegedly more objective or cross-cultural “humanism” of *Religionswissenschaft* ([Scientific] Study of Religion) espoused by the next generation of scholars roughly contemporary with Lonergan (M. Eliade, F. Heiler, J. Kitagawa, and so on). Occasionally—and perhaps mistakenly—still called “comparative theologians,” they indeed exhibited what some perceived as a pseudo-theological universalism. Then this approach, too, was deconstructed by the influential post-modern and post-colonial critique of any “transcendentalist” conception of the history of religions by such scholars as T. Asad, R. McCutcheon, or T. Fitzgerald. Finally, this critique was appropriated to the very fabric of what constituted the “new comparative theology” of F. Clooney, J. Fredericks, K. Ward, etc. (Locklin and Nicholson, “The Return of Comparative Theology,” 480–487).

105 Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 102, 108; John Thatamanil, *Circling the Elephant: A Comparative Theology of Religious Diversity* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2020), 154–64.

106 Lonergan, *Insight*, 402.



contextual-ness and the possibility of bias, comes to ground one's sense of the objective reality and one's ensuing moral and religious commitments *within* that context.

### *Loneragan's General Bias of Common Sense*

Another difference is that, if Freiburger's discourse on personal and cultural biases broadly corresponds to Lonergan's on "dramatic," "individual," and "collective" ones, Lonergan's emphasis on "general bias of common sense" explicates the "collective" bias of all humans in an innovative way. This type of bias disinclines its possessors from the all-too-exigent pursuit of theoretical knowledge with all its complex higher integrations and long-run solutions. Instead, it makes human beings prefer the immediate comfort of the concrete and particular. This bias poses a special threat when scholars tend to turn the field of their specialization itself into a bias "by failing to recognize and appreciate the significance of other fields."<sup>107</sup>

### *Fighting the Bias: Reflexivity and Transparency*

Another difference is that while Freiburger stipulates both the "relentless" self-reflectiveness of the comparativist and her "relentless" transparency to a larger scholarly community as tentative solutions to the problem of bias, Lonergan, without downgrading the importance of community in any sense, foregrounds the scholar's *personal* self-reflectiveness. He points out that it is primarily her personal "critical and selfless stance" that "promotes progress and offsets decline." For Lonergan, it is when the scholar follows through on her initial discovery of bias in her work that she is led to interrogate her other pre-existing beliefs that might have contributed to the error, knowing that "the associates of error can themselves be errors."<sup>108</sup> After all, each human being first decides by herself and for herself whether to take the content of her personal and cultural sources with a grain of salt or not.<sup>109</sup>

Further, Freiburger's apparent disparagement of the objectivity of (comparative) theology make one wonder about Freiburger's own religious

107 Lonergan, *Insight*, 250–53. One wonders if Freiburger is not afflicted with this type of bias when it comes to his attitude to comparative theology and the possibility of absolute objectivity.

108 Lonergan, *Method*, 44.

109 Lonergan, *Method*, 45.

stance. Is not he himself committed, at least in some existential manner, to a certain view of the world as constituted by affections, habits, or institutional loyalties? No one can be value-free in a total sense, at least in the sense of having a certain worldview that affects one’s beliefs, decisions, and choices. Thatamanil’s “comprehensive qualitative orientation” vis-à-vis the world is in fact one’s “religious” stance, being one’s qualitative interpretation of the felt character of the universe (homelike or hostile, elegant or absurd, etc.) that is accompanied by a commitment to certain ways of “comportment in the universe as so interpreted.”<sup>110</sup> If so, then Freiburger’s outright preclusion of any value judgments regarding the correctness or relevance of possible interpretations of the religious phenomena at hand, his apparent disparagement of the objectivity of (comparative) theology and his readiness to grant it to religious studies, and his simultaneous recognition of the inevitability of our individual and cultural biases in the “choices” that the comparativist makes almost at every step of her study—all this makes one wonder what Freiburger’s own “comprehensive qualitative orientation” might look like. Freiburger never mentions his own religious or institutional commitments anywhere in his book, remaining loyal to almost Cartesian ideal of the value-free viewpoint as applied to religious studies and denied to (comparative) theology. Nonetheless, if Hugh Nicholson is right to claim that one effective solution to the issue of the apparent interminability of human bias in any scholarly reflection on religious diversity is one’s readiness to acknowledge one’s normative commitments and interests right at the outset, and if this attitude is indeed a “postmodern equivalent” to the modern stance of objectivity,<sup>111</sup> then one might expect Freiburger to be at least more forthcoming on this all-important point.

### **Lonergan and Freiburger on Method: A Rectification**

Both scholars provide lucid methodological steps towards reaching their respective goals. However, while Lonergan, as a theologian, is ultimately interested in the question of unrestricted wonder and how it consequently unfolds in one’s shift from “normative objectivity” to “absolute objectivity,” and from the task of “interpretation” to that of “history/verification” (and then to “foundations/ethics” as one’s moral and/or religious conversion

110 Thatamanil, *Circling the Elephant*, 164.

111 Hugh Nicholson, “The New Comparative Theology and the Problem of Theological Hegemonism,” in *The New Comparative Theology: Interreligious Insights from the Next Generation*, ed. Francis X. Clooney (New York: Bloomsbury Academic & Professional, 2010), 59–62.

or “falling-in-love” with the ultimate), Freiburger, as a scholar of religion, feels driven to zone his methodological quest into what is merely descriptive and interpretive, theoretical and explanatory. In other words, for him, the main goals of comparative religion are either “illuminative” (enriching the description of the comparand) or “taxonomic” (contributing to a better understanding of the meta-linguistic categories), which corresponds to Lonergan’s descriptive and explanatory functioning of “understanding.” This difference of the goals seems to be something irreducible—but only until we remember that both theologians and religionists are human beings who cannot but wonder about the totality, and unity, of all that exists.

At this point, Lonergan’s methodology can contribute to Freiburger’s not only by further expanding upon why one compares (that is, because of one’s wonder about the totality of being as opposed to merely descriptive or taxonomic concerns) but also by explicating, and building upon, those basic elements of Freiburger’s system on which Freiburger himself remains eerily silent. That is, if comparative method, as Freiburger contends, is to facilitate the decisions that the comparativist makes almost at every step of the process of comparison, then, by Lonergan’s lights, it is also to explicate the relationship between decision-making and objectivity: one cannot decide that a theory or a category is worth engaging unless one first accepts that it is actually, or at least approximately, correct. Nor does Freiburger engage this task when it comes to the question of the difference between “religious studies” and other disciplines that speak of “religion,” such as philosophy of religion and theology. Instead, he simply says that scholars of religion, unlike most philosophers and theologians, “suspend” their decisions about which “religion” is “right” and avoid defining the “core teachings” of religious traditions so as not to “essentialize” them.<sup>112</sup> The scholars of religion, therefore, can be said to perform merely “interpretive” judgments on the level of “understanding”; theirs is merely hypothetical objectivity that does not address the question of the real.<sup>113</sup> However, as was shown, the complexity of comparative process is such that the comparativist makes decisions, selections, and choices all the way long—from the “pre-comparative” stage of study up to the moment of a theory rectification. Perhaps she does not consciously intend the question, “Which religion is right?” but she does, as Freiburger concedes, critically evaluate and then re-evaluate the existing categories, hierarchically ordering them in accordance with their levels of abstraction and deconstructing

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112 Freiburger, *Considering Comparison*, 39–42.

113 Dadosky, *Structure*, 36.

and constructing them to form the basis of broader models.<sup>114</sup> Freiberger, however, does not really account for how the presumed epistemological and axiological neutrality (or objectivity) of religious studies plays out when the comparativist is engaged in a classificatory or re-descriptive work. All he does, at this point, is to vaguely state that comparison, as it decontextualizes the comparands vis-à-vis a certain “point of comparison,” does not require the “identification of an essence present in both,” all such “essences,” for him, being something that one “inserts” to the study.<sup>115</sup> But does not one always decontextualize in view of some pre-existing category or concept that one inevitably “inserts” into the act of comparison either under the influence of one’s cultural background or under the exigencies of one’s own attentiveness, intelligence, and reasonableness (or both)? At this juncture, it is unclear why “decontextualization” avoids this epistemological “pitfall” when done in the spirit of transparency, responsibility, and productivity, and why “essentialization,” if taken to mean one’s seeking of “intelligible essences” or “forms” of things in a reasonable, self-critical manner, does not.

This absence of a full-fledged discussion on objectivity in Freiberger’s otherwise meticulous account indicates, by Lonergan’s lights, its propensity to cognitive “naivety,” i.e., an implicit supposition that authentic knowing is just “taking a look” and that what is deemed to be real exists as “already out there now real,” on the pattern of “ocular vision.” This naivety may exist even when the knower realizes the perspectival character of all knowledge and yet fails to account for the fact that certain perspectives are inevitably more correct or worthwhile than certain others. Instead, she might assent to that correctness or that value “by default” and uncritically (that is, without realizing this assent); but if this is to count as knowledge, it also needs to be verified by her own operation of judgement. By Lonergan’s lights, unless one attends to one’s implicit consciousness of these operations and makes this consciousness the basis of one’s epistemology, blunders may follow. Hence Freiberger recognizes the all-pervasiveness of personal and cultural biases and yet argues that the scholar of comparative religion, unlike the (comparative) theologian, prescind from any “inserted” a-priorisms, somehow getting to operate from the lofty vantage point of a neutral, value-free orbiter!<sup>116</sup> As was shown, for Lonergan, objectivity is “authentic

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114 Freiberger, *Considering Comparison*, 36.

115 Freiberger, *Considering Comparison*, 53.

116 Another such “blunder” might be Freiberger’s insistence on the perdurance of the empirical even on the higher levels of one’s understanding. That is, he conceives any comparand to constantly reside at some point of a “spectrum” one end of which is purely “empirical” (for example, two texts) and the other one is purely

subjectivity”: it transcends the subject toward the larger totality of being even if it is “given in [personal] experience, organized and extrapolated by [personal] understanding, posited by [personal] judgment.”<sup>117</sup> Further, for him, it is this work of one’s intentionality that, based on data, internally generates, rather than “inserts” from without, any concepts and categories one appropriates.

Nor can one easily dismiss “Transcendental Method” of being conducive to undue essentializing: its results feature only conditional necessity, and any emergent fresh data at any point of the future can modify them. In other words, knowledge and values that the Transcendental Precepts generate warrant one’s certitude in a way that does not dissociate itself from subjectivity altogether, so the knowing subject remains healthily conscious not only of incoming new data but also of the omnipresent—but, luckily, not totally omnipotent – human biases.

Thus Lonergan would agree with Freiberger that any fixed concepts and categories are determinations that “vary with cultural variations,” but he would also add that his Transcendental Precepts, viz., “Be attentive,” “Be intelligent,” “Be reasonable,” and “Be responsible” (i.e., the workings of the four levels of intentional consciousness) are not conducive to ossified scholastic categories, operating in a mode that is “comprehensive in connotation” and “unrestricted in denotation” and yet “invariant over cultural change.” That is to say, if categories determine their questions and furnish determinate answers, Lonergan’s Precepts furnish *any* insights solicited by the invariable questions that any human wondering about being explicitly or implicitly posits, i.e., “What is it?” “Is it (really) so?” “Is it worthwhile?”<sup>118</sup> For Lonergan, then, the category of the “transcendental” does not refer to something prototypical or a-temporal; rather, it refers to what transcends what one knows to seek what one is yet to know.<sup>119</sup>

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“theoretical” (e.g. two occasions of syncretism) (Freiberger, *Considering Comparison*, 85–87). In contrast, Lonergan thinks that the item-as-explained cannot but turn into a theoretical entity, no longer directly corresponding to the “experiential objectivity” of the empirical data and thus ceasing to be “empirical” as it is intelligently and reasonably contrasted with another item. One wonders if this insistence of Freiberger’s on the perdurance of the empirical even on the level of one’s understanding, too, has something to do with the “Cartesian” sense of scientific neutrality as the “vision” of things “as they are” by an extrinsic observer.

117 Morelli, *The Lonergan Reader*, 429, 522.

118 Lonergan, *Method*, 15.

119 Lonergan, *Method*, 15.

It is precisely this equilibrium between subjectivity and objectivity and between historicity and universalism that seems to be missing from Freiberger’s account. His assumed “value-free” approach of the scholars of religion seems to be missing the paramount post-structuralist insight (most forcefully articulated by such scholars as Alasdair McIntyre and Paul Griffith) that all enquiry whatsoever is “invariably partisan” and that even the non-theological study of religion is sustained by normative claims, which renders any sharp distinction between theology and religious studies meaningless.<sup>120</sup> Indeed, for McIntyre, any scholar at a modern university is to abandon the “pretense of neutrality” and reflexively act as the “protagonists of a particular point of view.”<sup>121</sup>

At the same time, Freiberger’s taxonomy does not only discern specific sets of operations to comparison (something that Lonergan’s system does only implicitly) but also enriches the ways in which Lonergan’s operations of conscious intentionality (and the related functional specialties) can be conceived to be functioning as they process analogical entities. That is, in Freiberger’s analysis, “selection” would correspond to Lonergan’s experiential encounter with the data of one’s sense and one’s consciousness and to the task of “research”; at this point, Freiberger’s relevant discourse on the “scope” and “scale” of study adds new and useful insights as to how to identify the initial parameters of research more effectively. Lonergan’s “understanding” would then thematize and objectify the comparands by having them “described,” which corresponds to the task of “interpreting.” As was mentioned, Freiberger does not explicate how he verifies the results of comparison except saying that the researcher is to be “relentlessly” self-reflective and transparent. Therefore, it will be Lonergan’s further operation of “judgment” that would ascertain the sufficiency of evidence as to the factuality of the events to which the description refers, which corresponds, with Lonergan, mainly to the task of “history/verification.” Freiberger’s “juxtaposition” would correspond to Lonergan’s further operation of “deciding” and the task of “dialectics/philosophy” as the researcher decides what elements of what comparand (or the comparand as a whole) to consider as more worthwhile and valuable, thereby foregrounding the existence of “differences-in-similarities.” This existence of differences will also reveal important insights regarding the comparands, and the researcher

120 Reid B. Locklin and Hugh Nicholson, “The Return of Comparative Theology,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78, no. 2 (2010): 479.

121 Locklin and Nicholson, “The Return of Comparative Theology,” 479; citing Alasdair McIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 231.

might want to “re-describe” the comparands in the light of those insights. As for the operation of “rectification and theory formation,” it will resemble Lonergan’s “foundations” only partially. While “foundations,” just like “rectification and theory formation,” aims at “similarities-in-differences” and helps derive general and special categories, it heads toward discovering a foundational reality and presupposes that the scholar takes a certain existential stance. This stance will normally include, for Lonergan, the fundamental experience of transcendence as one’s falling-in-love with the ultimate within one’s transformed intellectual, moral, or religious horizon. It is at this point that Lonergan and Freiburger will firmly part their ways: while the former will continue to refine, diversify, and promote the fruits of his transformed understanding in rather a social or communal dimension, the latter will stop short of any further procedures.

Indeed, for Lonergan, the experience of conversion would give rise to the affirmation and further development of “doctrines,” as well as to attempts to illustrate the intelligibility of this experience through its “systematic” exposition or an elaborated social policy. Then, as a final step, the scholar/human being might want to “communicate” her systematized insights to the wider community—not least thanks to his or her own implementing them in his or her living.

This integrated understanding of Lonergan’s and Freiburger’s methods can be illustrated by the following table:

	Mediated Phase	Mediating Phase
1) Experiencing	Research (Lonergan) Selection (Freiberger)	Communication (Social Action) (Lonergan)
2) Understanding	Interpreting (Lonergan) Description (Freiberger)	Systematics (Social Policy) (Lonergan)
3) Judging	History (Verification) (Lonergan) ↓ Self-Reflexivity and Transparency (Freiberger)	Doctrines (Social Policy) (Lonergan)
4) Deciding (value-making)	Dialectics/Philosophy (Lonergan) Juxtaposition (Freiberger) Redescription (Freiberger)	Foundations (Ethics) ↑
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">                     Rectification and Theory Formation (Freiberger)                 </div> <span style="font-size: 2em; vertical-align: middle;">→</span>	

### **An Integrated Understanding of Both Methods: Some Ramifications**

Important ramifications that this integrated understanding may have for the method of comparison might include the following points:

- 1) It encourages the comparativist to proceed further than “redescription” or “rectification” toward “foundations” and to assume an existential stance. The latter might bring in, in its wake, a surplus of understanding that is otherwise inaccessible. As Heinz Robert Schlette states,

The question may then be raised again whether the scholar in the science of comparative religion can “understand” Jesus or Buddha. He can depict and compare these figures. He can intellectually convey what their teaching and the demands they make are, their similarity and their uniqueness, but can anyone in this matter ultimately “understand” unless he commits himself?<sup>122</sup>

- 2) Comparative method ceases to be “sloppy” and “magic-like” (an accusation often leveled against it by its detractors), becoming more like a “science”: it starts with attentiveness to empirical data, intelligently interprets them, and then rationally objectifies the resultant interpretation through the criterion of sufficient evidence. In other words, the Transcendental Method reflects the workings of a human mind performing the same operations that ground special methods pertinent to the natural and human sciences. That is to say, any specialist in the natural sciences cannot but want to be attentive, intelligent, reasonable, or responsible.<sup>123</sup>
- 3) The movement into “foundations” might presuppose the comparativist’s creative engagement with, and perhaps even a commitment to, a tradition that is other than her own; new doctrinal re-affirmations and creative innovations might flow therefrom for the sake of a potential

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122 R.H. Schlette, *Towards a Theology of Religions*, trans. W.J. O’Hara (Freiburg: Herder & Herder, 1963), 55, in Dadosky and Krokus, “What Are Comparative Theologians Doing,” 71.

123 Lonergan, *Method*, 25.



higher integration, “mining deeper unity,” and “healing centuries of misunderstanding and division.”<sup>124</sup>

## Conclusion

Comparison between the “Transcendental Method” of Bernard Lonergan and the “comparative method” of Oliver Freiberger revealed the existence of complementary and irreducible differences between the two. That is, Freiberger’s emphasis on the illuminative and taxonomic goals of comparative scholarly activity, as well as his discourse on the scope and scale of the study, enrich the content of the relevant notions of “understanding” and “normative objectivity” in Lonergan’s system. Lonergan’s cognitive heuristics, however, treads deeper by explicating the further unfolding of the universal human wonder as one’s “judging” the results of description and/or classification to be true or false, or approximately true or false. Nor does this unfolding stop at this stage—if the knower is coherent with her “true self,” this unfolding naturally transitions into one’s commitment and falling-in-love with the ultimate, coming to ground, thanks to the unificatory tendencies proper to the functional speciality of “foundations,” the possibility for a genuine multiple religious or institutional belonging. This unfolding also leads the knower to transcend her mere comparative activity toward certain social policies and practices. The key cognitive mechanism that enables Lonergan’s system to amplify the significance of the results of comparison to this degree is the intentional operation of “judgement” and the concomitant “absolute objectivity”: as Lonergan demonstrates, it is self-defeating for any human being to deny that she can indeed know at least something about how things interrelate outside of her subjective perception (for this denial itself would be a truth-claim). If so, she *can* and *should* grasp something about things regarding which, in the *context* of which, she will be certain and toward which she will be naturally and logically predisposed to develop a sense of commitment and even love. The ensuing system is hardly “essentialist”—instead of basing itself on any apriorist categories, it rests on one’s predilection to ask several questions (“What is it?” “Is it worthwhile?” and so on) invariably present in one’s mind whenever one wonders about anything at all, and it gives no ready-tailored answers—in each case of knowing, they are worked out by the knower herself.

Hence, Lonergan’s system, if carried out to its limit, turns the comparativist into something more than she was before comparison—a

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124 Dadosky and Krokus, “What Are Comparative Theologians Doing,” 82.

lover, an activist, a practitioner. While some might find this movement transgressive to proper disciplinary bounds, other might find it liberating and illustrative of such desiderata of the modern-day comparative theology as the comparativist’s “personal enrichment” and “creative transformation.”<sup>125</sup> Whatever the case may be, Lonergan brings in rigorous methodic terms to the discussion of how the scholar’s insight can go a long way beyond mere theorizing and toward building important connections between the workings of human understanding (of which comparison is one particular) and a vast array of human activities such as history, philosophy, theology, ethics, social policy, and social action. Indeed, if Freiberger describes his own comparative method as just a “starting point for a serious, comprehensive, and productive debate about the methodology of comparison in the study of religion” and limns this debate as “long overdue,”<sup>126</sup> Lonergan’s methodology of human knowledge, albeit more general in its aims, is to be welcomed as a potentially robust catalyzer of such a debate.



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125 Cornille, *Meaning and Method*, 115, 119.

126 Freiberger, “Elements of a Comparative Methodology,” 12.

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