New Blackfriars

DOI:10.1111/nbfr.12055

Feelings and Decision Making

Jason King

Theology needs a better understanding of the role of feelings in decision making. Over the last decade, there has been an enormous amount of work—from neuroscience and psychology to economics and philosophy—that clarifies and develops how feelings aid in human understanding and acting.[1] While theologians have attended to feelings in recent years, they have spent the bulk of their efforts recovering Thomas Aquinas' thought on the topic.[2] While his work is important, Aquinas thought on feelings is couched in faculty psychology, a framework prone to not only marginalizing feelings but also valorizing the isolated, calculating individual.[3] Even those recovering

[1] This research has become broadly available in works such as Dan Arliely, *Predictably Irrational* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008); Malcolm Gladwell, *Blink* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2005); Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam Dell, 1995); Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2011); Jonah Lehrer, *How We Decide* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2009); John Medina, *Brain Rules* (Seattle: Pear Press, 2009); Martha Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Daniel Pink, *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2011); Barry Schwartz, *Paradox of Choice* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2004).

[2] Diana Fritz Cates, *Choosing to Feel: Virtue, Friendship, and Compassion for Friends* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), *Aquinas on the Emotions: A Religious-Ethical Inquiry* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009), and "Love: A Thomistic Analysis," *Journal of Moral Theology*, 1.2 (2012), pp. 1–30; Leonard Ferry, "Passionalist or rationalist: the emotions in Aquinas' moral theology," *New Blackfriars* 93 (2012), pp. 292–308; Robert J. Fitterer, *Love and Objectivity in Virtue Ethics: Aristotle, Lonergan, and Nussbaum on Emotions and Moral Insight* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); Simon J. Harak, *Virtuous Passions: The Formation of Christian Character* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1993); Carlo Leget, "Martha Nussbaum and Thomas Aquinas on the emotions," *Theological Studies* 64.3 (2003), pp. 558–581; Nicholas Lombardo, *The Logic of Desire: Aquinas on Emotion* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010); William C. Mattison, III, "Movements of Love: A Thomistic Perspective on Agape and Eros," *Journal of Moral Theology*, 1.2 (2012), pp. 31–60; Robert Miner**,** *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Thomas Ryan, "Aquinas on compassion : has he something to offer today?" *Irish Theological Quarterly* 75.2 (2010), pp. 157–174 and "Revisiting affective knowledge and connaturality in Aquinas," *Theological Studies* 66.1 (2005), pp. 49–68; and Paul Waddell, *The Primacy of Love: An Introduction to the Ethics of Thomas Aquinas* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1992).

[3] See Bernard Lonergan, "The Transition from a Classicist World-View to Historical Mindedness," *A Second Collection* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996) and Anne

© 2015 The Dominican Council. Published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd. 2015, 9600 Garsington Road, Oxford OX4 2DQ, UK, and 350 Main Street, Malden MA 02148, USA
https://doi.org/10.1111/nbfr.12055 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Thomas' thought recognize the limits of his categories and argue that Thomas has valuable insights *despite* them.[4]

Theology needs to update its emotional psychology from the thirteenth century to the twenty-first. This paper is an attempt to bring some of this recent research on feelings and decision making into theological discourse. It does this by utilizing Bernard Lonergan's significant work on feelings.[5] Lonergan's thought has two distinctive advantages. First, Lonergan transposed his thought from a faculty psychology into, what he called, intentionality analysis.[6] This transition means that he is not hampered by faculty psychology but is able to draw upon the insights of those, like Aquinas, who utilized it.[7] He thereby provides a bridge between the theological tradition and the contemporary work on feelings. Second, the basic structure of Lonergan's understanding of feelings and decision making finds support in the recent work on feelings. To be sure, the recent research adds significant details to Lonergan's framework, but it is a genetic relationship—"related as successive stages in some process of development"—not a dialectical one—"what for one is true, for another is false".[8] Thus, Lonergan's thought provides a way to transition to the twenty-first century by providing a framework to make sense of the recent research on feelings.

Thus, this paper presents a Lonerganian account of feelings, one that draws upon but also goes beyond Lonergan's original work. It argues that feelings: a) "frame" one's experience in b) an *eudaimonistic* way and, in doing so, c) propose a script, a possible course of action,

Carr, "The New Vision of Feminist Theology: Method," in Catherine Lacugna, ed., *Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective* (New York: HarperOne, 1993).

[4] In particular, see Cates, *Aquinas on Emotions*.

[5] The main work by Bernard Lonergan on feelings is in the chapter "The Human Good" in *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994). For reflections on this work, see Garrett Barden, "Sources of Value," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 7 (1989), pp. 132–140; Walter Conn, "Affective Conversion: The Transformation of Desire," in Timothy P Fallon and Philip Boo Riley, eds., *Religion and Culture: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lonergan, S.J.* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1987); Mark Doorley, *The Place of the Heart in Lonergan's Ethics: The Role of Feelings in the Ethical Intentionality Analysis of Bernard Lonergan* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996); Tad Dunne, "Being in Love," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 13 (1995), pp. 161–175; Terry Tekippe and Louis Roy, "Lonergan and the Fourth Level of Intentionality," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 70 (1996), pp. 225–242; Bernard Tyrrell, "Feelings as Apprehensive-Intentional Responses to Values," *Lonergan Workshop 7* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988); and Michael Vertin, "Judgments of Value for the Later Lonergan," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 13 (1995), pp. 221–248.

[6] See William Ryan and Bernard Tyrrell, "Introduction," in Bernard Lonergan, *A Second Collection* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), pp. vii-viii.

[7] This continuity is suggested in Doorley, *The Place of the Heart in Lonergan's Ethics* and Fitterer, *Love and Objectivity in Virtue Ethics*.

[8] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 236.

© 2015 The Dominican Council

https://doi.org/10.1111/nbfr.12055 Published online by Cambridge University Press

that is then d) evaluated by a judgment of value. Finally, the actions that people perform strengthen the frames and scripts that people draw upon in the daily lives. The result of this study, hopefully, will provide a basic framework for bringing a better understanding of feelings into theological discussions.

Frames

In Lonergan's discussion of feelings, he says that feelings respond to an "object", what is "intended, apprehended, represented."[9] Feelings arise, in other words, from experience. While Lonergan's understanding of this first level of intentional consciousness assumes a "bodily basis" of eyes, ears, mouth, skin, and nose, it also insists that this level involves a patterning.[10] This patterning of experiencing is "the formulation of an insight; but all insights arise from sensitive or imaginative presentations, and in the present case the relevant presentations are simply the various elements in the experience that is organized by the pattern."[11] In short, patterns organize sense data in ways that focus attention to what is important and arrange the data in a way to foster understanding.[12]

Patterning of experiencing is more widely known as "framing." Based on the work of psychologist Amos Tversky, the idea of "framing" is that people respond to situations differently depending upon how they "frame", i.e., interpret, the situation.[13] Framing "helps explain why people are much more likely to buy meat when it's labeled 85 *percent lean* instead of 15 *percent fat*. And why twice as many patients opt for surgery when told there's an 80 percent chance of their surviving instead of a 20 percent chance of their dying."[14] Dan Arliely, author of *Predictably Irrational*, gives the example that

> high-priced entrées on the menu boost revenue for the restaurant—even if no one buys them. Why? Because even though people generally won't buy the most expensive dish on the menu, they will

[9] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 30.

[10] Lonergan, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, Volume 3: Insight* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), p. 205.

[11] Lonergan, *Insight*, p. 205.

[12] See Robert Doran's work on this subject in *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990). Also Gladwell's *Blink* is also an exploration of this topic.

[13] See Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, "The Framing of Decisions and the Psychology of Choice," *Science* 211.4481 (1981), pp. 453–458. See also Amos Tversky and Richard Thaler's "Preference Reversals," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 4.3 (1990), pp. 201–211 (republished as chapter seven in Thaler's *Winner's Curse* (NY: Princeton University Press, 1994)).

[14] Lehrer, *How We Decide*, p. 106.

© 2015 The Dominican Council

https://doi.org/10.1111/nbfr.12055 Published online by Cambridge University Press

> order the second most expensive dish. Thus, by creating an expensive dish, a restaurateur can lure customers into ordering the second most expensive choice (which can be cleverly engineered to deliver a higher profit margin).[15]

While their work and those who apply it are mostly interested in how "frames" point to the "subjective" and "relative" aspect of decision making, it also indicates that experiences are not unfiltered sense data but sense data that has been attended to and patterned to foster understanding.

Feelings are operative in framing. Drawing on neuroscience, Daniel Goleman, in *Emotional Intelligence*, argues that sense data is processed by the neocortex—which organizes it into objects—and the amygdala—which organizes the sense data to generate emotional responses.[16] In cases of emergency, the amygdala will dominated and cause "fight or flight" like responses. In typical cases however, the neocortex will incorporate the emotional responses to present the object to consciousness. As Jonah Lehrer states in *How We Decide*, the neocortex "connects the feelings generated by the "primitive" brain—areas like the brain stem and the amygdala, which is in the limbic system—to the stream of conscious thought."[17]

In "framing" feelings have the specific function of highlighting certain features of sensitive data (thereby filtering out other features) to indicate how important it is that we attend to it. A good way to understand this function is by examining the affective extremes of too much and too little feelings. A typical example of the former situation is being surprised by a spider or a snake. The affective response to the sensitive data is so intense that it immediately responds to the danger and moves the person away from it. The emotions flare up and move the person before consciousness can fully process the scenario. Part instinct, part past experiences, these emotional responses quickly and often effectively organize the sensitive data to indicate what it is and what should be done. Even if this response is nascent and incomplete, it is already assessing its importance for the person, which in the example is "danger, get away". As Goleman writes, an affective response like this is "a reaction based on neural bits and pieces of sensory information that have not been fully sorted out and integrated into a recognizable object . . . [and] if the amygdala senses a sensory pattern of import emerging, it jumps to a conclusion,

[15] Ariely, *Predictably Irrational*, p. 4.
[16] Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, p. 18.
[17] Lehrer, *How We Decide*, p. 18

© 2015 The Dominican Council
https://doi.org/10.1111/nbfr.12055 Published online by Cambridge University Press

triggering its reactions before there is full confirming evidence—or any confirmation at all."[18]

The opposite of too little emotional responses also indicates that feelings help "frame" sensitive data by indicating its importance. As Goleman states, "the *lack* of awareness of feelings can also be ruinous, especially in weighing the decisions on which our destiny largely depends."[19] Goleman comes to this conclusion by examining the psychological condition known as *alexithymia*, literally "a lack of words for emotion."[20] As an example, Elliot, a patient who had a tumor removed behind his forehead, initially was able to return to his work and his marriage after the surgery, having lost none of his capacities for memory, logic, or attention. His emotional life, however, seemed to be flat. The result was that "he used his time terribly, getting lost in minor details; he seemed to have lost all sense of priority."[21]

This situation is echoed in people who suffer from autism: "Their extreme aloneness [which is the literal meaning of the term] is a direct result of not being able to interpret and internalize the emotional life of others."[22] In *Blink*, Malcolm Gladwell uses the work of Ami Klin who studied people with autism when they watched movies. Klin found that, because people with autism struggled to read the emotional life of others, they did not know what they should pay attention to in movies and thus struggled to understand them.[23] When people have too little feelings, they struggle to determine what they should focus on and, whatever they choose, to evaluate its importance.

Apprehension of values

Yet, frames do not determine understanding and action. They help organize sense data and give it a salience that pushes toward understanding. In Lonergan's term, this level of experiencing provides "objects" that are then understood through "insight". With feelings, this insight is an apprehension of value. When Lonergan talks about feelings, his focus is on a particular type: intentional responses to value. Intentional responses to value depend on intentional consciousness

[18] Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, p. 24. See also Lehrer, *How We Decide*, p. 18 & p. 35 and Gladwell, *Blink*, pp. 189–194 for similar discussions on how emotions can comprehend and move person to react before consciousness has fully assessed situation.

[19] Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, p. 51.

[20] Ibid., p. 50.

[21] Ibid., p. 52.

[22] Lehrer, *How We Decide*, p. 186. His discussion goes from pp. 186–188.

[23] Gladwell, *Blink*, pp. 214–221. Gladwell relies on Ami Klin's (and Warren Jones, Robert Schultz, Fred Volkmar, and Donald Cohen) "Defining and Quantifying the social Phenotype in Autism," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 159 (2002) pp. 895–908.

© 2015 The Dominican Council

https://doi.org/10.1111/nbfr.12055 Published online by Cambridge University Press

to arise. "Intentional responses. . . . answer to what is intended, apprehended, represented."[24] Lonergan states that intentional responses to value are moved by such objects as "the ontic value of persons or the qualitative value of beauty, understanding, truth, virtuous acts, noble deeds."[25] Intentional responses to value not only move a person toward value, they discriminate among values.[26] In short, intentional responses apprehend the values that are at stake in a situation or compare these values to each other.

In her magisterial work on feelings, *Upheavals of Thought*, Martha Nussbaum has a similar perspective to Lonergan: feelings respond to objects and thereby grasp value. Feelings, Nussbaum states, "are pulled into being by their object, and by the seeming importance of the object. In this sense intentionality is at their very core."[27] While the way feelings respond to objects may vary from person to person or even by a single person—people may differ in their emotional responses to broccoli or chocolate or meat and an individual may at one time enjoy meat, chocolate, and broccoli and in another state or time be repulsed by them—feelings arise in response to the object in that person's mind.[28]

For Nussbaum, this response of feelings is not random but *eudaimonistic*.[29] Feelings, she states, "are concerned with value, they see their object as invested with value and importance."[30] In indicating the value for the person, feelings indicate what will make the person happy in the ancient Greek sense of *eudaimonia*. Nussbaum does not mean that feelings are always perfect guides to true value but rather provides a person "with a sense of how the world relates to its own set of goals and projects."[31] To use Lonerganian terminology, feelings indicate value based on the individual's horizon.

Others also note this role feelings play in connecting objects to people's broader perspectives. John Medina, author of *Brain Rules*, notes that for people to understand something, it helps for them to be excited about it. If they see how it is connected to and relevant to other ideas that are already coded into their brain, they will more readily value and remember it. Medina's pithy way of saying this

[24] Lonergan, *Insight*, p. 205.
[25] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 31.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, p. 131.
[28] Ibid., p. 28. See also, pp. 130–131.
[29] Ibid., p. 31.
[30] Ibid., p. 30. See also, p. 23, "Nonetheless, I shall argue that emotions always involve thought of an object combined with thought of the object's salience or importance; in that sense, they always involve appraisal or evaluation." And p. 88, emotions are understood to be "a certain sort of vision or recognition, as value-laden ways of understanding the world."
[31] Ibid., p. 117.

© 2015 The Dominican Council
https://doi.org/10.1111/nbfr.12055 Published online by Cambridge University Press

is that people do not pay attention to "boring" material.[32] In *Drive*, Daniel Pink also argues that feelings "drive" understanding. [33] If people care about an idea or a task, they will be "intrinsically motivated" to seek greater knowledge about and mastery of it. In other words, if people feel that the material is important, grasp its relevance to their lives, they will not only work to understand it but will also do so as part of their own "project" and connected with their own goals.

Thus, feelings do more than indicate "this object is important". Feelings connect framed or patterned experiences to people's "goals and projects". They enable people to imagine how an object fits in with who they are or how they want to live and thereby suggest how one should respond to the object. In this sense, feelings are *eudaimonistic* as they indicate whether this or that way of acting will lead to happiness. As Goleman states, emotions "are, in essence, impulses to act."[34] Nussbaum echoes this statement saying that, feelings "are closely connected with *action*; few facts about them are more obvious."[35]

Thus, in grasping the value of objects, feelings concomitantly suggest "scripts". I borrow this term from sociology where it means "a repertoire of acts and statuses that are recognized by a social group, together with the rules, expectations and sanctions governing theses acts and statuses."[36] There are three key points to this definition. First, scripts are brief narratives that people rely on to direct social encounters. Second, scripts are linked to social situations. Each script represents a possible course of action for a specific context. Third, people have a "repertoire" of scripts. They constitute part of one's horizon and come from "social groups", individual variations of these "acts and statuses", past actions, and hoped for future actions.

This idea—that value is both an indication of importance and a possible course of action—is, perhaps, the one most likely to be challenged. Thus, let me provide two thought experiments and an example to demonstrate this claim. First, imagine you are out in public and have to use the restroom. When you enter one available to the public, you find a brown substance smeared all over the floor. "What is it?" is perhaps your first response. Mud? Feces? Yet, in the midst of figuring out what it is, there are probably several other questions immediately arising: How badly do I have to use the restroom? Is there another stall? Can I walk around it? Do I want to do

[32] See Medina, *Brain Rules*, chapters 4 and 9.
[33] Pink, *Drive*, chapter 3.
[34] Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence,* p. 6.
[35] Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, p. 135.
[36] From J. Laws and P. Schwartz, *Sexual Scripts: The Social Construction of Female Sexuality* (Hinsdale, IL: Dryden Press, 1977) as quoted in "Script," *The Complete Dictionary of Sexology* (New York, NY: Continuum, 1995).

© 2015 The Dominican Council
https://doi.org/10.1111/nbfr.12055 Published online by Cambridge University Press

so? Shouldn't someone clean this up? Should I do it? If these were your responses or like your responses, notice that they are action oriented. Moreover, even your initial response of "what is it" was, most likely, not a dispassionate assessment, as if the situation were a novel curiosity, but rather a revulsion pushing you to figure out what is the substance so that you know what you should be doing.

Second, imagine going on a date, a mildly enjoyable one. Say you are playing a board game at the other person's apartment. Suddenly, with a loud crash, the glass door to the apartment is shattered by a former significant other. Your first response is probably not a dispassionate, "the door is shattered," but, rather, "Danger! Run!" Also, it was probably not "there is another person who is in danger" but rather "I need to help my significant other!" The options probably continued: I can run, I can turn and fight, I can try to talk it out, I can "turn the other cheek", I can run and then call the police. Obviously, these are not exhaustive options, but these are the ones that readily come to mind. Notice, the feelings that arise are rooted in the value of your life and the life of the person with whom you are on a date, but it is not abstract reasoning about the situation but a recognition that something must be done, a script, because the value of life is so strongly felt.

The example comes from Jonah Lehrer's *How We Decide*.

> Fierce winds began to howl through [Mann Gulch] canyon, blowing straight toward the [firefighters]. Dodge [the captain] could only watch as the fire became an inferno. He was suddenly staring at a wall of flame two hundred feet tall and three hundred feet deep on the edge of the prairie . . . Dodge screamed at his men to retreat. It was already too late to run to the river, since the fire was blocking their path. Each man . . . started running up the brutally steep canyon walls, trying to get to the top of the ridge and escape the blowup. Because heat rises, a fire that starts burning on flat prairie accelerates when it hits a slope. On a 50 percent grade, a fire will move nine times faster than it does on level land. The slopes at Mann Gulch are 76 percent. After a few minute of running . . . Dodge realized the blaze couldn't be outrun. The hill was too steep, and the flames were too fast. So Dodge stopped running . . . But Dodge wasn't committing suicide. In a fit of desperate creativity, he came up with an escape plan. He quickly lit a match and ignited the ground in front of him. He watched as those flames raced away from him, up the canyon walls. Then Dodge stepped into the ashes of this smaller fire, so that he was surrounded by a thin buffer of burned land. He lay down on the still smoldering embers . . . Only two men in the crew [of 16] besides Dodge managed to survive.[37]

Again, Dodge did not coldly calculate the speed of the fire and the futility of fleeing nor did he abstractly posit the value of his own

[37] Lehrer, *How We Decide*, pp. 95–96

© 2015 The Dominican Council
https://doi.org/10.1111/nbfr.12055 Published online by Cambridge University Press

life. Rather, it seems, the value he apprehended was that he should try something other than running up the canyon because his life was valuable. The two, understanding and action, were what the feelings brought forth.

Lonergan seemed to grasp that the value feelings apprehended was less like "this is valuable" and more like "I need to respond this way because this is valuable." In *Method in Theology*, Lonergan says that, "Value is a transcendental notion."[38] The notion of value responds "immediately and directly" but also directs people to their "goals".[39] It causes us to respond with the "stirring of our very being".[40] It drives people to "questions of deliberation" that ask "whether this is truly and not merely apparently good".[41] This good is "never some abstraction" but "only the concrete".[42] This good at the level of individual decision making consists of the "capacities for operating" that "procure instances of the particular good".[43] While Lonergan did not explicitly articulate the operation of feelings I have argued for here, he seems to imply it by indicating that value is driving toward the "good" where the good is some concrete action.

One final point, intentional responses are not fixed responses to objects but rather fluctuate, first calling forth one frame and then another to understand sense experience, then responding to this frame and then that frame to discern the object's various *eudaimonistic* implications and related scripts. This modulation of intentional responses is because they are not drawn *ex nihlio* from a person but rather from his or her horizon.[44] The horizon provides the store from which people draw their frames, *eudaimonistic* evaluations and scripts. These come from the accumulation of past knowledge, including both an individual's own insights and whatever has been appropriated from others.[45] Based on this past knowledge, a person frames and affectively responds to the world around them. Moreover, horizons include what people have done and what people believe they should do. It is loaded with patterns of behaviors, scripts. Thus, sense experience can be framed and reframed and intentional responses can evaluate and revaluate, script and re-script, all because a person can draw from their horizon possibilities to understand and act. Intentional responses are thus not the final word on value but rather push

[38] Lonergan, *Method*, p. 34.
[39] Ibid., p. 35.
[40] Ibid., p. 38.
[41] Ibid., p. 34.
[42] Ibid., p. 36.
[43] Ibid., p. 48.
[44] Lonergan, *Insight*, p. 237.
[45] In his section on "Beliefs" in *Method in Theology* (pp. 41–47), Lonergan indicates that while people come to know things through their own insight, the vast majority of what people know are mediated to them from others.

© 2015 The Dominican Council
https://doi.org/10.1111/nbfr.12055 Published online by Cambridge University Press

toward an evaluation of what is apprehended, urging an affirmation that this is or is not a "true" value, this should or should not be done. In other words, people move from intentional responses to judgments of value.

Judgment of Value

Lonergan's discussion of intentional responses to values culminates in "Judgments of Value." Lonergan describes judgments of value as an assertion that a particular object is truly good or that one object is better than another object. "Judgments of value are simple or comparative. They affirm or deny that some *x* is truly or only apparently good. Or they compare distinct instances of the truly good to affirm or deny that one is better or more important, or more urgent than the other."[46]

Lonergan likens these judgments of value to judgments of fact.[47] Both judgments of value and judgments of fact affirm or deny that a proposed proposition is true. "In both, the meaning is or claims to be independent of the subject: judgments of fact state or purport to state what is or is not so; judgments of value state or purport to state what is or is not truly good or really better."[48] The objectivity of both judgments of value and judgments of fact depends upon the authenticity of the subject. "In both, the criterion is the self-transcendence of the subject."[49] These two judgments differ in the content of what they affirm. Judgments of fact assert what is or is not the case. Judgments of value assert what should or should not be the case. "They differ in content, for one can approve of what does not exist, and one can disapprove of what does."[50] These judgments also differ in their relationship to self-transcendence. People who make true judgments of fact are involved in cognitive self-transcendence. By making a true judgment of value, people move toward moral self-transcendence. "[T]he self-transcendence of the subject. . . . is only cognitive in judgments of fact but is heading towards moral self-transcendence in judgments of value."[51]

What seems implied and is consonant with what I argued in the previous section is that judgment of value are not just affirming "this is valuable" but rather "because this is valuable, this should be done." In other words, a judgment of value is affirming that a

[46] Ibid., p. 36.
[47] Ibid., p. 37.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.

© 2015 The Dominican Council
https://doi.org/10.1111/nbfr.12055 Published online by Cambridge University Press

particular script is the appropriate response to a particular object understood *eudaimonisticly*. I want to argue that this is the case not just because it is implied in Lonergan's thought but that this is what happens in evaluating a proposed course of action. Two examples of how judgments of value can breakdown indicate the role and purpose of judgment: by choking and by forcing a judgment.

First, people can "choke". In chapter five of *How We Decide*, Jonah Lehrer details cases where the famous opera singer Renee Flemming became consumed with self doubt and could no longer perform her signature piece in *The Marriage of Figaro*, the 1999 collapse of Jean Van de Velde on the last hole of the British open, and how people who consciously say to themselves "do well on this standardized test because it is important" negatively affect their scores.[52] All of these cases of "choking" result, according to Lehrer, because people start to over analyze the situation. "The opera singer forgets how to sing. The pitcher concentrates too much on his motion and looses control of his fastball. The actor gets anxious about his lines and seizes up onstage. In each of these instances, the natural fluidity of performance is lost. The grace of talent disappears."[53] In this situation, people "ignore the wisdom of their emotions".[54] In effect, choking points to a situation where the *eudaimonstic* qualities of an object and its concomitant script are evaluated endlessly without a judgment made on what is a correct or better course of action. Evaluation upon evaluation is made but the judgment is never completed. The person is left not knowing what to do or how to do it.[55]

Second, people can force a judgment. Lehrer presents several examples of this, but his discussion of Philip Tetlock's research provides the most compelling example. Tetlock evaluated the predictions of political pundits starting in the Reagan presidency and kept tracking them for the next thirty years.[56] Tetlock found that pundits faired worse in their predictions than random chance, predicting accurately only 33% of the time.[57] "The central error. .. was the sin of *certainty*... [w]hen pundits were convinced that they were right they ignored any brain areas that implied they might be wrong."[58] This forced "judgment" leads to the affirmation of a particular script without properly evaluating it. Alternative scripts

[52] Lehrer, *How We Decide*, pp. 134–139.

[53] Ibid., p. 136.

[54] Ibid., p. 140.

[55] For a similar discussion of this same phenomenon see Schwartz, *The Paradox of Choice*, chapter 4.

[56] See Philip Tetlock, *Expert Political Judgment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006) as cited in Lehrer, *How We Decide*, pp. 207–210.

[57] Lehrer, *How We Decide*, p. 208.

[58] Ibid., pp. 208–209.

© 2015 The Dominican Council

https://doi.org/10.1111/nbfr.12055 Published online by Cambridge University Press

are not evaluated, different *eudaimonistic* aspects of the object are not considered. The judgment of value is made but fails to discern true value because the proper evaluation has not taken place.

Thus, judgments are meant to both evaluate the value in itself and in relationship to alternatives and conclude that this or that is what should be done. The failure to achieve this self-transcendence, to use Lonergan's term, is bias or moral importance. The problem with Tetlock's political pundits was not that they made mistakes, everyone does, but that they persisted in making the same kind of judgment, not learning from their mistakes or attending to relevant data. This is bias. Choking is an example of moral impotence, the failure to choose a course of action. People know how to act or sing or answer questions but because of fear or anxiety or doubt or some other difficulty do not do what they can or should do. They try to reframe the issue, understand it a different way, find some alternative course of action, struggling for a way to make an authentic judgment of value.

As these examples indicate, judgments of value move inexorable toward action. This momentum relents in one of two ways. Either a value is acted upon or it is not. If the action is not performed, people start to reframe the situation to elicit new feelings and thus propose new courses of action.[59] The structure of the process, however, is the same as if it is acted upon. People frame situations, these frames interpret the experience in ways that give rise to feelings, feelings then respond with a *eudaimonistic* evaluation of the object and a script, and this pushes toward a judgment of value. The process is repeated until some deed is performed.

There is one last piece of this sketch. Whatever is done circles around and shapes people's horizons. At the most basic level, the script that is enacted becomes a course of action that is likely to be repeated in that particular situation and those like it. The frame, feeling, script and action become further embedded in an individual's horizon. Moreover, the values that are at stake (or biases that are operative) become strengthened. They become more pronounced in the horizon and thus play a greater role in determining what frames are called forth and what scripts are enacted. Finally, if repeated, these feelings, scripts, and actions can reconfigure one's horizon. As Lonergan states,

> I have been conceiving feelings as intentional responses but I must add that they are not merely transient, limited to the time that we are apprehending a value or its opposite, and vanishing the moment our attention shifts . . . [T]here are in full consciousness feelings so deep

[59] For Lonergan's discussion of this phenomenon, see *Method in Theology*, pp. 37–38, when judgments of values do not result in doing.

© 2015 The Dominican Council
https://doi.org/10.1111/nbfr.12055 Published online by Cambridge University Press

> and strong, especially when deliberately reinforced, that they channel attention, shape one's horizon, direct one's life.[60]

While frames elicit feelings and feelings propose a course of action, a script, that a judgment does or does not confirm, only action confirms this process. Actions might flow nicely from authentic intentional responses and judgments, but also, actions might not and thereby force a reframing of what is happening. Any biases that are operative get reinforced unless the course of action is one of self-transcendence. Thus, actions can strengthen or reconfigure a horizon by adding new or reinforcing existing frames, feelings, and scripts.

Conclusion

This study has not exhausted the topic of decision making or even the role of feelings therein. How biases contort this process and the social mediation of one's horizons, frames, and scripts are the two most obvious points that need developing. Yet, this essay does provide, through the framework of Bernard Lonergan, a contemporary understanding of feelings in decision making. With this greater understanding, the work of theologians in reflecting on character, virtue, and conscience can be more effective and, thereby, better able to support those pursuing Christian discipleship.

Jason King
Saint Vincent College, Latrobe, PA

jason.king@email.stvincent.edu

[60] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 32.

© 2015 The Dominican Council
https://doi.org/10.1111/nbfr.12055 Published online by Cambridge University Press