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### What Is Ethics? An Answer form a Voegelinian-Lonerganian

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The 20th century produced a number of important thinkers, among them, Bernard Lonergan and Eric Voegelin. It is impossible to reduce the significant ideas of each of them to one that condenses everything they said. This paper develops several of their ideas. The first is Lonergan's man as a cognitional structure that is formally dynamic and self-assembling. It functions at five levels of awareness as it demands itself to be attentive, intelligent, rational, responsible, in love, and that correct understanding is achieved when a virtual unconditioned – a conditional whose conditions have been met – is reached. The second is Lonergan's idea that freedom is possible only when a man moves from the level of rationality to the level of responsibility. Freedom has to be distinguished between essential and effective. The third is Lonergan's explanation of the structure of the human good as a three-leveled structure by the individual good, the good of order and value. The fourth is Voegelin's idea that ethics is a set of symbols which express the tension of searching for God while living in the metaxy. This paper assumes that when Voegelin speaks about the luminosity and intentionality of human consciousness he is referring to what Lonergan explains as the formally dynamic and self-assembling nature of human awareness. For Lonergan, ethics is possible because the demands stated above allow a human to see what he must do – at the level of responsibility – as he affirms –at the level of rationality. To Voegelin the experience of this demand is what is expressed in the set of symbols that we call ethics. This paper explores the manner in which the Lonerganian ideas and the ideas of Voegelin can be integrated. The result of this exploration is presented, precisely because Voegelin sees the expression of the experience as something that begins with a set of compact symbols and moves towards a more differentiated symbolic expression, as a search that moves from compactness toward differentiation.

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