

## **A Popular Account of Zubiri's Philosophy in Twelve Episodes**

J. William Deatherage

*Executive Director  
Clarifying Catholicism  
Washington, DC USA*

### **Abstract**

This is a brief overview of Zubiri's philosophy intended for a broad audience of educated readers curious about his ideas and seeking a new perspective on knowledge and reality. It is presented in a popular format suitable for podcasts, interviews, or other such venues.

### **Resumen**

Esta es una breve descripción de la filosofía de Zubiri destinada a una amplia audiencia de lectores educados que sienten curiosidad por sus ideas y buscan una nueva perspectiva sobre el conocimiento y la realidad. Se presenta en un formato popular adecuado para podcasts, entrevistas u otros lugares similares.

### **Editor's Introduction**

This article is quite different from the usual academic articles that we publish in this journal. But I believe it is an excellent way to introduce Zubiri's thought to a much wider audience, and for that reason I have included it here. The hope is that readers will find an opportunity to use the episodes in informal discussions with friends and colleagues. The material should not be taken in a rigorous academic sense, but a way to get people thinking along new lines, those developed by Zubiri. Any philosophy is difficult to read and understand, but in light of the goals, I believe this type of work is extremely valuable as well as interesting. The author, Mr. Will Deatherage, has worked very hard to produce a script that can explain many of the key ideas in Zubiri's philosophy to those with just a general background.

### **Episode 1: Problems with Ancient Philosophy**

Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, welcome to Clarifying Catholicism. Ordi-

narily we explore theological topics, but in this series, we investigate the writings of, in my opinion, the most important little-known philosopher of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Xavier Zubiri. This is not a theological series at all, whatsoever. However, if you want to do good theology, you'll need a good philosophical backbone, first. So, if you want to check out the rest of the episodes in this series, check the link in the description. Without further ado, onto the show!

What is reality? What is truth? What is being? What is knowledge?

To some of you, these questions might seem pretty obvious. Like, what is truth? Truth is whatever is real! To others, these questions might seem kinda impossible? What is truth? I dunno. There is no objective truth; every culture seems to have their own. To others, still, these questions might seem pretty pointless. What is truth? Who the heck cares. How about you quit making videos on hippy philosophy stuff and get a real job like an engineer, Will?

The thing is, though, that these questions do matter and they do have answers. Think of it like this. Let's say that truth is

defined as whatever a divine figure like God tells us is true. And let's say that God told us that it is morally defensible to steal, murder, or worse, bomb a bacon factory? That definition of truth would be highly restricted to whatever culture or religion claims to have access to such divine wisdom. "It's true because the high priest says it's true!" Or what if we say that truth is defined as whatever the strongest in society says it is? Then, what if a society arose that declared itself the master race and the sole arbiters of truth who sought to impose its values on others and decimate populations that stood in its way? Huh. Like that would ever happen... Or what if we say that truth is totally subjective, that every person gets to decide what is good and evil for themselves? And in this world the only universal truth is that every person ought to define everything they do and are according to their whim, from their ethics to their biology? Huh. When you put things into that perspective, suddenly the definitions of truth, reality, and being all seem pretty important.

So, what is truth? Or what is reality? Several philosophers have written hundreds, if not thousands, of pages trying to answer these seemingly rudimentary questions. But none, in my opinion, has done as thorough, thoughtful, and nuanced of a job addressing this question than Spanish philosopher Xavier Zubiri.

A quick note on Zubiri's resume. In the twentieth century, he learned phenomenology with philosophers Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger before studying physics, philology, and biology. During his years in Berlin, he dialogued with scientific giants, such as Albert Einstein, Max Planck, Werner Jaeger, and Erwin Schrodinger. Zubiri's central goal was to build a realist systematic philosophy that was fully compatible with modern scientific theories and corrected some errors he saw plaguing the entirety of western philosophy. Though he admired his philosophical predecessors, from Parmenides, to Thomas Aquinas, to Heidegger, he was highly aware

of their flaws, and sought to correct for what he viewed as their fundamental mistakes.

His years of both scientific and philosophical study culminated in his book *Sentient Intelligence*, which we will explore in this series. But before we dive into Zubiri's work, it's important to recognize some of the flaws he attributed to his predecessors. And for this, we have to go all the way back to the Pre-Socratic philosophers, who are, well, basically the guys before Socrates.

Around 500 B.C., there was this guy named Parmenides, who attempted to answer the seemingly trivial question "what is being?" His answer seemed pretty straightforward. Being is "that which is." Seems kinda obvious, but it set a pretty important standard that lasted in philosophy for millennia. By saying that being is what is, Parmenides is putting the focus of being on things, as in being is a property that belongs to things, rather than a property that belongs to people or the process of observing things. The difference between these is kinda like debating if the property of speed belongs to the thing that is moving, the person who is seeing it move, or the process of seeing it move. For Parmenides, being is a property that belongs to the thing itself. Or, in Zubiri's terms, being belongs to reality, rather than the impression of reality. Thus, we have our **first problem of ancient philosophy: why do we assume that Being belongs to things, rather than the process of knowing things?**

Parmenides, like many philosophers, uses the term "Object" to refer to things. Objectum, which is Latin for Object, is composed of Ob, which means against, and Jectum, which means something underlying. Zubiri accuses Parmenides of only really focusing on the Jectum part, as a thing's Being is reduced to some part of it that lingers on and endures throughout all changes. Later philosophers would call this underlying aspect of a thing the Essence of a Being.

So, where exactly can we locate such an underlying aspect of a thing? If I take apart a tree into atoms, will I somehow find

the essential component of the tree? **This is the second problem of ancient philosophy: if Being belongs to things, and we cannot observe their Essences, then where are they?**

Plato, perhaps the most influential philosopher of all-time, answered this question by saying that the essence of a thing is not a physical component, rather it is a spiritual one. You see, the changing physical world is an illusion. What is real are the unchanging forms of things that we have access to via the soul. Thus, **Being is what is Real, and what is Real is not of the physical world but is extrinsic to it, only accessible via the soul. When the soul accesses being/reality, it is accessing truth.** Thus, according to Zubiri, being, reality, and truth, are kinda just lumped together as that unchanging spiritual property of a thing that is accessed via the soul, not the body.

So, when you know what a thing is, you know what its underlying Reality is. And a thing's Reality does not belong to the physical world, rather to the spiritual realm of the soul. And while philosophers like Aristotle would appreciate the physical world for giving us raw particular bits of content, it was up to the soul to ultimately discern and access what a thing's being, or reality, is. Basically, the physical world gives us scrambled content, and the soul unscrambles it to match up with a thing's essence, which exists independent of sensation, since it belongs to the thing.

Thus, Zubiri identifies what, in his opinion, is the central problem of ancient and medieval philosophy: **the body and soul serve fundamentally different roles in the attainment of knowledge; the body merely delivers content to the soul, but the soul alone figures out what a thing is; and even if the body played a part in the attainment of knowledge, the soul was ultimately what determined what was real and what wasn't.** This vastly downplays the body's role in attaining knowledge and results in a system that is focused on what Zubiri refers to as

sensible intelligence, rather than sentient intelligence.

There is yet another problem of ancient philosophy. The universe, according to Aristotle, is eternal, and its elements are static. **The diversity of things is merely a rearrangement of the universe's essential elements, but since those core essential elements remain the same, it means the laws that govern the universe are static, and those laws range from physics to ethics.** This could, and arguably did in the late middle ages, lead to overly rigid metaphysics and theology in the Catholic Church. It's a mighty huge assumption to make that all the laws of the universe remain the same, and the legacy of that idea would last until modernity.

So, let's recap. Here is the ancient philosophical worldview according to Zubiri:

Being belongs to things, and it corresponds to what is real. But what is real isn't physical and temporary, rather it is spiritual and eternal. It is the soul's job, as spirit, to tell us what is real. The spirit is, therefore, superior to the body, when it comes to attaining knowledge. And that knowledge, of course, can be close to perfect, or true, since the whole universe is a rearrangement of eternal elements. Thus, a proper soul can discern the laws of being, nature, and ethics.

Here are Zubiri's problems with this worldview:

Why should being belong to things themselves, rather than the process of knowing things? Why should we equate being, truth, and reality? How can we assume that knowledge belongs to the soul rather than the body? Why does the spiritual, assuming it exists, have so much power over the physical when it comes to knowledge? Doesn't the physical world have just as much to do with forming a person's intellect as a supposed spiritual one does? Why should we assume that the universe is eternal and its laws unchanging? These are questions that modern philosophers attempted to address, though Zubiri thinks they did so incorrectly. That's the topic for

next episode, though. Until then, have a great day and God bless you.

### **Episode 2: Problems with Modern Philosophy**

Last episode, we learned a little about Xavier Zubiri's life, as well as his issues with the Ancient philosophical tradition. In summary, he criticized the ancients for believing that being belongs to things, rather than belonging to observers or the process of knowing things, that knowledge strictly occurs in the soul, rather than the body, and that the universe's laws are unchanging. He also accused them of failing to make appropriate distinctions between Being, Truth, and Reality.

Modern philosophers had their fair share of critiques of these same ideas, though before we get to them, we should mention an important transition in philosophy. The middle ages sparked a renewed interest in Ancient philosophy, which was spearheaded by scholars like St. Thomas Aquinas. This movement, known as Scholasticism, appropriated many Ancient Greek beliefs and applied them to their medieval setting, albeit with a few very important distinctions.

First of all, the Scholastics rejected the Greek notion of an eternal universe, given their Judeo-Christian belief that God created the world from nothing. This important reversal has arguably remained consistent in philosophy until today! And while some may see this as an arbitrary shift, it's actually quite important. You see, for Aristotle, the elements are eternal and, thus, NOT created by God. This makes God merely a mover of elements, leaving the soul's quest to know things largely unconnected to God. With scholasticism, however, we have the notion that all things, being connected by God, are imbued with a spiritual reality hidden beneath their particular physical forms. The process of attaining knowledge, in a sense, receives an even more spiritual dimension, since, according to the Christian tradition, God wants us to know Him through His

creation. This shift to a created universe is a subtle yet important distinction between Ancient and Scholastic philosophy, as it arguably produced an even more static and rigid way of doing philosophy. For, to contradict the established principles of epistemology, nature, and even ethics, was to question God Himself, as well as the authorities He appointed to govern us. This closely intertwined philosophy with theology, which, arguably, was a mistake.

Furthermore, the Scholastics took the Greek's equation of being with reality to its logical conclusion by using the exact same word to refer to both being and reality. That word in Latin is *ens*, and it is commonly translated as both being AND reality. Thus, in Zubiri's words, the Scholastics "entified" reality, fixing being and reality as one in the same, a huge assumption!

Now, whereas the Ancients and Scholastics equated being with reality and located them beyond the physical world, the modern philosophers took a very different direction. Starting with Descartes, reality was located inside the mind, rather than beyond it. Since the mind embeds us in reality, that same mind is capable of peeling back layers of reality and thus, arriving at a perfect knowledge of truth. This movement, which is characterized by an overconfidence in reason, is called Rationalism. To know things is to conceive of them clearly, which Zubiri finds quite problematic, since he observes how while knowledge of a given subject does yield some level of satisfaction, it does not exhaust the topic. There's always something more to know, which defies the Rationalist belief that knowledge is merely about arriving at rational clarity.

Essentially, Rationalism switched out the soul's supremacy over the body with the mind's supremacy over the body. Instead of the body giving confused content to the soul to figure out what was real, it was now up to the mind to perform this task. Meet the old boss; same as the new boss, I guess.

Immanuel Kant also shared Zubiri's critique of Rationalistic knowledge. His

alternative, though, was just as problematic, according to Zubiri. For Kant, there is a strict division between being and reality. We can only know things as presented beings, which he calls, phenomena, but their underlying reality, which he calls noumena, is totally unknown to us. This division between being and reality, to Zubiri, is unacceptable, since it renders reality inaccessible. But if reality was inaccessible, then we wouldn't be able to say anything about it, including the statement "reality is inaccessible." A bit of a paradox, there. Furthermore, it seems a bit problematic to talk about being if we have zero interaction with the realities that give rise to those beings.

Attempting to bridge the gap between reality and being, Freidrich Hegel conceived of reality as shaped by being, though this time being was something that belonged to humans. You see, while ancient and medieval scholars claimed that being belonged to things, Hegel believed that being instead belonged to humans. This shift is often known as the turn from objectivism to subjectivism, since it meant that being, reality, and truth were properties of the subject, rather than the object. Now, Rationalism had already started this by saying that reality is shaped by the mind, but Hegel took Rationalism to its logical conclusion by saying that if being is shaped by the mind, and the mind is constantly changing, then being isn't something fixed; it changes over time.

Thus, unlike the Ancients and Scholastics who considered being as extrinsic and static, as well as the Rationalists who considered being as immanent and static, Hegel considered being as immanent and fluid. It, as well as truth and reality, fundamentally change over the course of history.

So, even though Kant believed that it was impossible to know reality, he at least saw being as fixed according to certain laws that were held together by an unknowable reality. For Hegel, being, reality, and truth, are fluid, and they flow according to the collective consciousness that humans share throughout history. That consciousness is shaped by ideas that conflict with each other, otherwise known as a dialectic. This

is important because what shapes reality, according to Hegel, isn't so physical, rather it is intellectual.

Basically, we go from a static and rigid concept of the universe in the Ancient-Scholastic method, in which being, reality, and truth are fixed, extrinsic entities to the physical world, to a very fluid concept of the universe according to Hegel, in which being, reality, and truth are shaped by our subjective minds over time.

All of these conceptions of Being, Reality, and Truth, according to Zubiri, are unsustainable. The world according to the Ancients and Scholastics is too fixed and rigid. It risks falling into a dangerous absolutism in which certain cultures and religions can claim supreme access to reality because their souls are superior to others. The world according to the Rationalists is just as dangerous, for it reduces Being, Reality, and Truth to products of the mind, thus paving the way for subjectivism. It's my mind and my Truth! The Kantians threaten to sever access to reality at all whatsoever, which could lead to skepticism or relativism. Finally, the moderns make Reality entirely dependent on the whim of changing times. There can be no consistent Truth if Reality is dependent on Being.

All of this stems from an improperly articulated relationship between sensation and Intellection. For the Ancients and Scholastics, the senses are inferior to the intellect, which is located in the soul. For the Rationalists, the senses are also inferior to the intellect, which is, this time, located in the mind. For Kant, the Senses are organized by the intellect, but the intellect never reaches reality. For Hegel, the intellect, and by extension reality itself, fluidly shapes itself over time via dialectic. Notice how in each of these systems, there is a rather rigid distinction between the functions of the senses and intelligence. The strict division between mind and matter, especially the pervasive notion of the mind's dominance over the body, makes all of Western philosophy, according to Zubiri, aim at a sensible intelligence, in which the body just delivers confused content to the almighty

intellect, rather than a sentient intelligence, in which mind and body shape each other.

Given our understandings of modern physics, it makes much more sense to conceive of a universe whose laws are dynamic, rather than static. Also, given our understandings of biology, psychology, neuroscience, and evolution, it makes much more sense to conceive of a metaphysics that has a radical unity, rather than division, between body and mind, sensation and intellection.

Next episode, we will begin studying what Zubiri conceives us as the proper relationship between sensation and intellection, which therefore leads to a proper relationship between being, reality, and truth. Until then, have a great day and God bless you!

### **Episode 3: Zubiri's Realism**

During the last couple of episodes, we looked at Xavier Zubiri's critiques of both ancient and modern philosophy. His primary concern is that neither system accurately describes the relationship between sensation and intellection which ultimately leads to a confusion between reality, being, and truth. As a refresher, the ancients and scholastics saw intellection as inherently superior to sensation. Intellection belonged to the soul, making reality and being extrinsic to the physical world. The Rationalists shared the view of intellection's superiority but located intellection in the mind. This tethered reality to the intelligible world and rendered all of reality as rationalizable. Immanuel Kant believed in intellection's superiority as well, but he denied its ability to reach reality. Thus, whereas his predecessors equated being with reality, Kant divorced them from each other. Finally, Friedrich Hegel believed that the intellect shaped itself, as well as reality, over the course of history.

Throughout this series, we'll revisit some of these philosophers, but it is important to have given some background for precisely what Zubiri felt he was reacting against. With all this context, let us begin.

Zubiri believes that the only place we can start building a systematic philosophy is from the moment of sensation, which he calls the moment of **impression**. Now, a general term that will be quite important throughout this series is moment. It is crucial to recognize that the moment of impression doesn't strictly refer to the thing impressing itself, nor the person experiencing the impression, rather the time at which the thing impressing and the person impressed coincide.

Anyways, the moment of impression produces excitations and actions. Excitations are involuntary biochemical responses. Think something like oxygen causing the body to breathe. We don't exactly have much control over it, nor does our behavior consciously change in response to it. Actions, on the other hand, are voluntary processes that involve an awareness of the impressions. For example, a gas leak would disrupt the body's natural excitations caused by the impression of oxygen; we would notice that something is off.

The most basic type of action humans and animals participate in is called sensible apprehension, or primordial apprehension. When we primordially apprehend something, we are aware of that thing in a strictly sensual manner. Think of when you stub your toe on something. Your immediate thought isn't "ah, yes, that door caused me to stub my toe," rather you probably just think "pain!!!" That apprehension of immediate sensation, which is something all animals and infants, participate in, is the primordial apprehension.

When we primordially apprehend things, three things happen to us: arousal, tonic modification, and response. Arousal is pretty much an awareness of the situation. For example, the dog smells something delicious when meat is dangled in front of it. Tonic modification changes what Zubiri calls a vital tone. The dog's appetite changes from satisfied to hungry. Response is a reaction. The dog prepares to pounce on the meat. All three of these moments occur at once. The dog's affect, vital tone, and

its response change at the same time it smells the delicious meat.

Notice how the dog's arousal, modification, and tone are all contingent on it being impressed upon by the meat. Zubiri is what we call a radical realist, meaning the way we are impressed upon and ultimately conceive of things is dependent upon the impression the real content leaves upon us.

These moments of primordial apprehension I just described concern how the person or animal is internally changed by impressions. Basically, the dog was internally changed in terms of its arousal, tone, and reaction. Now I'd like to explain the structure of these impressions, themselves. What exactly is it about the meat that causes the dog to change its internal behavior in such a way?

Primordial apprehension is structured by three moments, all of which belong to the thing being apprehended, rather than the person apprehending the thing. As you will soon learn, Zubiri is a die hard realist.

The first moment that structures primordial apprehension is affection. This occurs when the person or animal notices something, but it is the thing itself that causes how the person/animal reacts. For example, something about the meat causes its affect to change. There is also a moment of otherness, which is the distinction and identification of this sensation. Thus, the dog not only feels a change in its affect, but something about the impression allows it to identify this change in affect. The dog's mood not only changes but it is aware of the change in its mood. It notices it is hungry. Otherness is structured by what Zubiri calls formality and content, and you cannot have one without the other. Content is what is delivered by the impression to be formalized. Dog is given content of meat. Formality is how the content is situated or related to other content. Dog can be hungry in a wide variety of circumstances, but somehow that content is defined in relation to the meat. Basically, there is something about the meat that forces the dog to formalize it as delicious. Getting back to the moments of impression, the third moment

is imposition of sensation. This is basically the force that imposes the sensation upon me, such as the dog's master dangling the meat.

To summarize, the real imposes itself upon us. Imposition consists of three moments: affection, otherness, and force of imposition. Affection is merely how something brings about an awareness. Meat makes dog feel something. Otherness is what allows for the identification or distinction of that change in affect. Something about meat makes the dog formalize its feeling of hunger as distinct, or other, from its other feelings. Finally, force of imposition is what brings about that affection and otherness. The human dangling the meat in front of the dog made it feel hungry. Again, all three of these moments occur at once and they are dependent upon the real.

The three moments of imposition bring about the process of sensible apprehension, which involves arousal, tonic modification, and response. The dog is internally aroused by the meat. Its feelings change. Finally, it responds to that change in feeling.

Again, primordial apprehension is the most basic apprehension humans experience. It is just raw stimulation. We experience this as babies before we can even form concepts about the world. And this is what makes Zubiri's philosophy radically realist, for before we even attempt to rationalize the world by forming concepts about it, the way our minds are shaped are totally dependent upon things like the diets of our pregnant mothers, the environments we are born into, and how our parents/teachers educate us in our earliest days. Of course, all species participate in primordial apprehension. What makes humans unique, though, is our ability to connect these raw stimulations into a network of interrelated stimuli, which we will talk about next episode.

Until then have a great day and God bless you!

#### **Episode 4: What is Reality?**

Up until now we've been lumping human and animal apprehension together,

but as we all know, the way animals apprehend things is a bit different than how humans do. So, it's time to draw some distinctions between what Zubiri calls apprehension of raw stimulation, or primordial apprehension, and apprehension of reality, or ulterior apprehension. Remember that primordial apprehension is called primordial because it is the rawest form of apprehension we have. It happens as infants, or even in the womb! These primordial apprehensions are apprehending pure, real content, via affection, otherness, and force of imposition. Zubiri enjoys using the analogy of a constellation. For animals and young humans, each apprehension could be considered a star in the sky. In the primordial apprehension, you're jumping between stars, "Hunger! Excitement! Happy! Sad!" but you aren't exactly connecting them to each other.

There is a second kind of apprehension, though. Ulterior apprehension, on the other hand, is unique to humans; it is not merely the apprehension of real content, though it certainly depends on that real content. Instead, ulterior apprehension is the apprehension of **reality**. Zubiri defines reality as something distinct from, something more than, the real content that animals apprehend. **Whereas real content deals with content that stimulates animals of all species, reality refers to the distinctly human way that this real content is formalized into an integrated perception. Thus, Zubiri defines reality as formalized content, and when I say formalized I mean in the uniquely human way of interconnecting content to create an integrated perception. How is ulterior apprehension different from primordial apprehension? Let's dig in**

Last episode, we talked about how primordial apprehension is structured by affection, otherness, and the force of imposition. Today we will compare how primordial apprehension of real content is structured with ulterior apprehension of reality.

In the primordial apprehension of real content, affection is just a stimulative

response without a sense of relation to whatever provoked it. When the dog smells the meat, it is stimulated to feel something physically, but it does not draw a connection between itself and the stimulator. Or think of a baby that is hungry; the baby does not think to itself "I am hungry," it merely feels the hunger. Ulterior apprehension of reality, on the other hand, involves the apprehendor instinctively taking an identity in relation to it. When an adult smells a piece of meat and feels hungry, we instantly feel a sense of relationship to that sensation. We think "I am hungry."

In the primordial apprehension of real content, the otherness that is experienced is a matter of distinguishing one sensation from others. This distinction, however, does not translate that sensation into an independent concept. That belongs to the ulterior apprehension of reality, in which otherness is hyperformalized. We call it that because the sensation that is distinguished is categorized as existing independently of that moment of sensation. For example, a dog smelling meat clearly distinguishes that sensation of hunger from all others. But it doesn't really abstract that sensation of hunger into an independent concept that can be applied to others. Humans, on the other hand, can abstract deliciousness from the meat which causes them to sense it. The human would say "This meat smells delicious, just like that pie I ate last night was delicious." Otherness for humans, involves distinguishing things as existing independent from the moments in which we sense them. It's one thing to say "I feel hungry." It's another thing to say that the feeling of hunger exists as a concept.

Finally, for the primordial apprehension of real content, the imposition of sensation is directly associated with whatever is impressed upon the animal. Dog cannot separate deliciousness from meat. Instead, it considers deliciousness and meat as one thing, delicious-meat. Humans, on the other hand, can separate what is apprehended from the source of the apprehension. We know that the quality of



deliciousness and the meat are two distinct concepts.

Thus, we see how although humans and animals participate in responses to raw stimuli, or primordial apprehension of real content, only humans can participate in formalizing that real content into the constellation we know as reality.

Notice how Zubiri explains the differences between animal primordial apprehensions and human ulterior apprehensions via biological and neurological language. This is because, according to Zubiri, reality is a concrete, physical structure, and he accuses ancient and modern philosophers of having reduced reality to some far-off mystical spiritual realm and some psychological construct that is all in your head, respectively.

Zubiri says that the greatest mistake classical philosophers made was to ignore primordial apprehension in favor of ulterior apprehension as the prime location of reality. Allow me to explain. For Zubiri, our raw stimulation informs what and how we organize things into reality. For classical philosophers, however, raw physical stimulation has nothing to do with how we organize reality, since reality is a static and fixed spiritual realm that is accessed via the soul, NOT sensation. The soul's job is to determine which raw sensations are real, meaning they correspond with divine universal forms of those sensed things. The almighty soul judges lowly physical sensation. This is problematic for several reasons. First, a considerable amount of our apprehensions are not the result of the intellect judging, rather they come from pure sensation. Consider how a significant amount of how we perceive the world comes from when we are babies and small children; we have not yet gained intellectual capacities and are instead formed by a significant amount of pure sensation. Even the dietary habits of our mothers while we are in the womb greatly shape how we later conceive reality. Thus, it is primordial apprehension, which deals with real content, that is the cornerstone of reality, not some mystical realm of the soul.

This means a few things, according to Zubiri. The first is that the way reality is formed is dependent on the real content that shapes it. But this would only really work if the organ that deals with shaping reality was also physical. This is the intellect, and while classical philosophers believed the intellect to be a strictly spiritual part of a human being, Zubiri understands the intellect as a process belonging to physical organs, just as sight belongs to the eye. And because the intellect is physical, it can be shaped over time. Just as a mother's diet can impact the intelligence of her baby, or just as dropping your kid down a flight of stairs can make him a bit kooky (happened to me), the intellect, as a physical organ, is shaped by other physical things.

Thus, rather than the spiritual intellect dominating the physical material, it is the physical material that shapes the intellect, which is also physical.

It used to be believed that the difference between human and animal knowledge was a matter of humans having superior souls. We now know that the difference in organs, especially the neurological ones, between animals and humans, is responsible for differences in how real content is engaged with. Swapping out a human's eye with that of a dog's would fundamentally alter the way humans see the world and think about the world.

Does a soul exist? That isn't really the inquiry of Zubiri's work, though he is Catholic. However, while ancient scientists assumed that the soul was the control panel of all intelligence, we now know that our brain structure, our hormones, and our neurological chemicals can explain some aspects of human thought and perception. Before we had such an understanding of these things, ancient scientists and philosophers had to fill in the gap in understanding about nature with the soul. This doesn't mean the soul doesn't exist, only that it functions differently. Its effects are manifest by these observable physical phenomena like hormones, atoms, particles, etc., and those physical neurological structures fundamentally change the way we think.

The soul is thus intimately connected with our ability to perceive reality.

This helps Zubiri craft a systematic philosophy that radically unites body and intellect so that our sentience and intelligence shape each other. No longer is intelligence some extrinsic soul, nor is it some hyper-rational mega mind that towers over the material realm, rather it is a physical activity, just as sight, taste, touch, smell, etc. are physical activities as well.

Speaking of which, for centuries, classical philosophers insisted in a strict division between functions of the body and functions of the soul. Modern philosophers did no better, insisting on a strict division between body and mind. For Zubiri, the unity between body and intellect is so strong that their functions cannot be separated. Hence, Zubiri categorizes the so-called spiritual or psychological senses as physical senses as well.

These senses include our sense of towards, or what some might call a sense of direction, kinesthesia, temperant, affectant, position, coesthesia, and intimacy with reality. All of these senses are physical, and we will address each of them, starting with the most important one.

Towards, or what some might call a sense of direction, is the most important of all the senses in Zubiri's analysis of reality. You see, humans not only taste, see, hear, smell, and touch things, but unlike animals we relate things to each other via their transcendental, which we just talked about. And that transcendental is directed by our sense of towards. It is the towards that takes the steak we smell and directs it at other things in the world, a process known as hyperformalization. This sense of towards is how we can say "all steak is delicious." In classical philosophy, this notion that things behave a certain way is called teleology, and the director of that teleology existed in the realm of souls. For Zubiri, though, the director of this sense of towards is a physical organ.

Now, this sense of towards is not a strictly psychological construct, as many of

the existentialists would claim. They would say that we have the freedom to define anything the way we want to. Zubiri disagrees. Our sense of towards is not self-determined, rather it is determined, it is dependent, on the same real content that shapes the way all creatures, from animals, to infants, to adults, apprehend the world.

There are other senses as well that are directed by the towards, though they are less relevant to our study. Kinesthesia is an awareness of towards. Not only is our apprehension of the steak directed towards other things, but we are self-aware of towardsness or direction. We also have a sense of temperant, which is if things are hot and cold, affectant, which is a sense of pain and pleasure, position, which is a sense of orientation, and coesthesia, which is a sense of intimacy with reality. Again, without a sense of towards, we would be stuck in the realm of apprehension of stimulation with the other animals. Our senses would just be jumbles of stimulated reactions to apprehensions rather than connecting and relating them with each other. But because all of our senses are so diverse and are shaped by our environments, there are discrepancies between how people hyperformalize the content given from the real. This is how there can be different opinions whilst sharing some commonalities: while we might share a sense of towards, our other physical senses are so diverse that they often conflict with each other.

The last major point I'd like to stress before addressing the structure of reality is that reality is not some end goal that the soul on its own reaches for, rather reality is the starting point of attaining knowledge. We are born, as children, as fetuses, into a content-rich world that shapes the way we perceive things. Reality is not something we reach for or grasp for. It is something we are born into. From our earliest pre-intellectual moments, our sense organs are being shaped, molded, into how they will later intelligize, as Zubiri will later say truthify, the world. And along the way to mature intellect, we are constantly, both

subconsciously and consciously formalizing content, simply because reality isn't out there; it's all around us.

Now, reality is unified because all apprehensions contribute to the production of reality. Remember that these apprehensions are dependent upon impressions that come from the real. Reality, which is formalized content, depends on real content to supply the content and shape the way it is formalized.

Our impression of reality is structured by what Zubiri calls "transcendentality," which is the moment in which an individual thing transcends itself. Now, when I say "transcends itself," I mean that a thing's qualities are abstractable and applicable to other things; so "transcendentality" refers to what is common to all things. Like when I see and smell a steak, I can imagine the qualities of the steak applying to things other than that steak. Steak tastes salty. So does bacon. Heck, I can imagine multiple steaks. This is a defining characteristic of reality. And again. This transcendentality does not exist in our mind; it is not a psychological construct, as many modern philosophers would argue. Rather, there is something, something real, about things that impress their transcendentality upon us, thus directing our sense of towards. There is something about the steak that allows for its qualities, like deliciousness, to transcend my individual experience of it. And this is something animals cannot participate in precisely because they lack the capacity for hyperformalization, which, again, allows for us to separate distinct qualities between things.

Transcendentality is structured by openness, respectivity, its ownness, and worldliness. Openness is what allows a thing's traits to apply to other things. A steak's salty taste is not exclusive to steak. Other things can be salty too! Like bacon or the crusaders after pretty much every single crusade. See my ecumenical councils of the Catholic Church series. Respectivity means that a thing's openness is defined in respect to its moment of formalization. This means that not just anything can be salty,

rather only things that produce that moment of saltiness can be called salty. A steak is salty in respect to the moment in which we taste it. A mint is not salty in respect to its moment of taste. Its ownness is what openness and respectivity are open to. When we taste a steak, we recognize that saltiness is a unified quality. Finally, worldliness is a thing's capacity to be open in the world. A steak's worldliness allows it to be relatable to other things in the world to begin with. And all this power comes not from us, as many modern philosophers would argue, but from the mighty steak.

In summary, a steak, as a worldly thing, has qualities, which are distinct in their its ownness. The steak and its qualities are relatable to other things in the world because of their openness. These open qualities, however, must be respective to our moment of their apprehension. We cannot say that the steak is a brick because biting into a brick delivers a different moment of apprehension that biting into a steak does. This, again, makes Zubiri a realist, not an idealist.

Ok! We're almost there.

Ulterior apprehension has two modes: The first is called field mode. When ulterior apprehension occurs, that apprehension is nested in an already-existing field of apprehensions and impacts that field. Think of it like how magnetic fields can affect each other. In basic terms, imagine putting a magnet in a group of other magnets. How that singular magnet behaves will depend on the magnets that are already there, but that magnet's characteristics will also affect the magnets that are around it. Basically, field mode allows for singular apprehensions to be affected by reality, yet reality is also affected by these singular apprehensions.

Let's look at an example. Let's say you've already primordially apprehended a tree. You see a tree and, via ulterior apprehension, you connect the color of its leaves to your pre-existing apprehension of green. You place green in relation to tree in your field, interconnecting them, which enables you to say "A tree is green."

The second mode of ulterior apprehension is called world mode, which enables us to think of a thing as a singular moment of the world. For example, if you say “a forest is made up of trees” and “a forest is green,” we aren’t talking about two different forests, rather both apprehensions are united in that singular moment of the world. All things, as moments of the world, have the capacity to extend themselves far beyond the field, meaning they can have unlimited connections to other things whilst retaining their unity.

Okay, we’ve covered a lot of ground. Basically, there are two kinds of apprehensions: There is apprehension of mere stimulation, also known as primordial apprehension, which both animals and humans participate in and concern how we react to immediate sensation. Then there is apprehension of reality, or ulterior apprehension, which is exclusive to how humans apprehend reality, since it allows us to connect different things we apprehend. The quality of things that allow us to interrelate them in the first place is called transcendentality. However, not everything comes from the same content and things can be sensed in very different ways. The content of a steak is different from the content of a brick, so even though they are both real, there is difference between them. Also, only seeing a steak, for example, delivers different formalization than only smelling one does. But there is one single sense, our sense of towards, that allows for us to experience transcendentality, it lets us connect all of our diverse senses and the diverse content from the real. This is how we can say that some things are similar to each other and some things are different. When we place things among each other in the field of reality, in which they are referenced to each other, ulterior apprehension is functioning in field mode. When we talk about things as entities among all other entities, regarding their field placement, ulterior apprehension is functioning in the word mode.

Now, there are two kinds of ulterior apprehension: logos and reason. We will talk

about the first one next episode. Until then, have a great day and God bless you!

### **Episode 5: What is Logos?**

Last episode we introduced some distinctions in the process of attaining knowledge. First there is primordial, or primordial, apprehension, meaning they are apprehended without reference to other things; just as raw stimulation. I see forest, I apprehend forest as a single thing, NOT as a collection of trees, NOT as a thing that is green, it is just a unified thing. All animals, infants, and humans, participate in primordial apprehension. We do not apprehend reality when we primordially apprehend things, rather we only apprehend the content of the real.

Then, there is ulterior apprehension, in which things are apprehended in reality, meaning they are apprehended with reference to other things. I see forest, I apprehend forest as a collection of trees. Reality is defined as formalized content, meaning it is formalized in relation to other content.

Now, recall how ulterior apprehension depends on primordial apprehension, since, first of all, you can’t relate things to other things unless you have apprehended them as unified things to begin with. Secondly, our sense organs, which together with our nervous system and brain are responsible for formalizing that content, are shaped by real content. If someone smashes my face in with a brick, I’m probably gonna be seeing, and thus apprehending reality, a bit differently for a while.

A couple more reminders. Our sense organs that are responsible for apprehending reality are not limited to what have traditionally been called the physical senses, such as sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste. In fact, all animals have those senses. Rather, those senses that have been called intellectual senses by ancient philosophers and mental senses by modern philosophers, are also responsible for shaping how we perceive reality. There is one sense in particular that is responsible for connecting the dots of apprehensions into the constellation that is reality, and that is our

sense of towards, which is kinda like a sense of direction. This sense of towards is a sense that guides us in connecting the various things we apprehend into the network of reality. In terms a classical philosopher might understand, it is a teleology that is immanent, rather than external. And this sense of towards is a physical, concrete, sense, just as taste and touch are.

Zubiri believes that the ancient distinction between the functions of the body and soul is a detrimental assumption that ruined western philosophy's direction from the start, since it led to the flawed conception of the soul as an almighty judge that towers over the body. This, of course, led to the idea that reality is something totally distinct from the physical world; it is something spiritual that the soul alone could access. And this, as we explored in previous episodes, led to a lot of problems.

Modern philosophy didn't really solve this problem. Instead of an almighty soul towering over the lowly body, it was the all powerful mind that stood superior to the inferior body. Basically, it kept the distinction between physical and intellectual functions.

Today, is quite apparent, thanks to neuroscience and biology, that there is an intrinsic unity between our so-called physical and intellectual organs. Our sensible and rational capabilities rely on each other and shape each other. Like, if you have a religion that believes in the unity of the body and soul, wouldn't everything the soul does be exemplified by, rather than distinct from, the body? Huh.

Let's move forward. Last episode, I mentioned that there are two kinds of ulterior apprehensions: logos and reason. I've already described how ulterior apprehensions involve connecting things we primordially apprehended with each other. There's a couple of ways this happens, but in its most basic form, when we are apprehend something on its own, we place it in what Zubiri calls a field. Last episode I mentioned how you could think of this field like a magnetic field. When you put one individual magnet next to others, its magnetic field will not only be affected by the other

magnets, but its own field will affect its surrounding magnets. In philosophical terms, the way we apprehend things depends on other things we have apprehended, and the way we apprehend those other things can depend on a singular apprehension.

For example, if I know that lightbulbs, computers, and televisions are bright, I am placing them all in the field of things that are bright. Now, let's say I learn, or apprehend, that electricity is what causes brightness in technology. This new fact would impact the way I think about lightbulbs, computers, and televisions. Hence, a singular apprehension has changed the field. Likewise, the next time I see a bright piece of technology, I assume that it is powered by electricity. And that is how a singular apprehension is molded by a pre-existing field. This is the ulterior apprehension's field-mode.

Now, there is another mode, called world mode. It's less relevant to our discussion this episode, but it's basically what allows us to attach multiple apprehensions to the same thing, so that when I say "lightbulb bright" and "lightbulb electric" the two apprehensions refer to a singular thing that operates in the world.

Let's focus on the field. The field is a nifty place because it both encompasses and exceeds all things. Basically, everything you can possibly think of exists in the field, though the field is also open to anything you haven't ever thought of. Think of it as a horizon. Everything you see in the sky is encompassed by it, but you know there is something beyond its edge.

The field has two moments: "among," which puts things in reference to each other, and "by," which adds a functionality between things. For example, let's say you figure out that your finger hurts when you touch a hot stove. When you touch a hot stove, the real force of imposition draws the stove and pain closer to each other in the field. It places them among each other. The moment of "by" informs you that perhaps it was the heat of the stove that caused your pain.

**This process of connecting things in the field is called logos. And this idea of logos is, in some ways, similar to the ancient one, but in other ways very different.**

Now, in classical philosophy, it was believed that things had what were called “essences.” Essences are tendencies for things to behave a certain way. For example, it is in tree’s essence to grow or it is in philosophy’s essence to be confusing. What caused these essences to exist? Was it something physical? Classical philosophers said no. Recall that in classical philosophy the ultimate reality exists beyond the physical world. It is the spiritual realm, the realm of the soul, that commands the physical to behave according to static, unchanging laws. And that director of all essences was called the logos, and the logos was a spiritual entity.

Remember, though, that Zubiri rejects this model. The ultimate reality isn’t beyond us but is rather around us. However, unlike a lot of modern philosophers would claim, reality is not controlled by us, rather it is determined by real content that imposes itself upon us. That real content shapes not only what we sense but how we sense it. And our association of things we sense with each other is driven by our physical, not spiritual or mental, sense of towards. And it is this sense of towards that, like all our other physical senses, determines what things are associated with each other. But that determination relies on the real composition of things, the content, and how the real world has shaped our senses, which are physical organs that apprehend things. Thus, Zubiri defines logos as that physical moment in which things in the field are united. So, just like classical philosophers hold, there is something at work in the universe that binds the laws of nature. However, unlike classical philosophers, this binder is not spiritual and eternal, rather it is physical and dynamic like all other physical functions are.

Let’s look at an example. I say that it is in cilantro’s nature to be delicious. Most

sane people would agree. But it is only because our tongues have been genetically predisposed to enjoy cilantro that we associate cilantro with deliciousness. But this is not because of some mystical and static reality, rather it is caused by an immanent and dynamic sense of taste and towards that is shaped by the real. Recall that there is a cursed subset of the human population to whom cilantro tastes like soap. If this trait were to somehow infect the rest of the human population to the point at which all people agreed cilantro tasted like soap, cilantro’s nature will have changed to taste like soap. Thus, again, Zubiri believes that natures exist and the logos directs them. However, there’s nothing spiritual about natures or logos, and they are not static. Natures are concrete immanent qualities of things, they can change over time, and they are directed by the physical ulterior apprehension that is logos.

**At this moment I’d like to reinforce a key theme in Zubiri’s philosophy that this series has led up to. Reality, intellection, and logos are dynamic. They are dynamic because their operations are shaped by other things over time. If a species, over millions of years, loses its ability to see the color blue, then the color blue will cease to exist, since reality depends on how we formalize content. But this does not mean that reality, intellection, and logos are subjective. I can’t just decide that chopping off my arm with a machete isn’t gonna hurt. Our senses, and therefore the way we formalize content, are at the mercy of real content. Thus, and this is a key thing, reality is dynamic but not subjective.**

Zubiri’s philosophy fits remarkably well with the way we understand cosmology and biology. Most scientists agree that the universe’s laws are more dynamic than static. Even for the human species, it is true that someone from the Sahara desert will have a vastly different sense of what “hot is” than someone from the Alaskan tundra. Reality is at the mercy of our sense

organs, and those sense organs, as well as the real content that influence them, are dynamic.

The beauty of Zubiri's vision is that he retains a reliance on the real while bridging the gap between the physical and meta-physical realms that was arguably instigated by Plato and Aristotle. For, reality and logos aren't alien things imposed upon the physical world; they are products of the physical world that, in turn, tell us about the physical world as dictated by the real physical content that has shaped them.

Now, a key part of logos is the dynamic between primordial and ulterior apprehensions. This dynamic is determined by a few things.

Let me use an example. Let's say you meet someone, let's call him Jason, on the street for the first time who greets you with a smile and a firm handshake. Something about that encounter delivers an immediate primordial apprehension of friendliness. Now, let's say that while shaking his hand and smiling he admits he's a serial killer. Suddenly, you can't seem to look at the guy the same way any more. Despite the fact that he's still smiling and shaking your hand, just like before, learning this new fact about him beyond pure stimulation, apprehending that this man whose hand your shaking is associated with murder, changes the way you perceive him. No matter how hard you try, you can no longer look at this person, or apprehend them, the same way. Next time you primordially sense Jason, perhaps you will sense fear.

Now, this dynamic between primordial and ulterior apprehensions is determined by a few things.

First is remaining. The way a thing impresses itself upon you will determine how much of it remains, which will determine the dynamic between primordial and ulterior apprehensions. Finding out that Jason, whose hand you shook, is a serial killer definitely leaves quite the impression that will last in your mind forever. However, if Jason had said something like he was on his way to the bus, that probably wouldn't last very long in your mind. It won't really change the

way you think of him when you see him, or primordially apprehend him, again. Thus, the way something remains, which is determined by the force of imposition from the real, determines the dynamic between primordial and ulterior apprehensions.

Second is towards. We've talked about towards a bit already, but it basically determines what things the dynamic will exist between. Again, if Jason tells you he is a serial killer, it will trigger a dynamic between your apprehension of Jason, your apprehension of serial killers, your apprehension of unpleasantness or unease, etc. Basically, if one is predisposed by their sense of towards to dislike serial killers, then you will likely dislike Jason. Thus, the two primordial apprehensions of disliking murder and Jason will converge in the ulterior apprehension to form a brand new primordial apprehension of disliking Jason. But the association between them is determined, again, by the towards.

Third is distance. When we sense a difference between primordial and ulterior moments, we distance ourselves from the thing in the field of reality. Let's unpack that with an example. Your first impression, your primordial apprehension, of Jason was one of pleasantness. Something about that initial impression of smiling and shaking his hand made you feel great. However, learning he is a serial killer didn't really match up with your initial impression of him. There is thus a sense of disharmony between your initial primordial apprehension of pleasantness and your ulterior apprehension of connecting Jason with a serial killer. This disharmony produces distance. You take a step back from everything you thought you knew or felt about Jason to reevaluate things. In a sense, this happens when your expectations do not correspond to reality.

Fourth is reorientation, which is how this distance is traversed. It basically closes up the gap that was opened by distance. Upon learning that Jason is a serial killer, distancing yourself from the initial good vibes you got from him, you conclude that you do not like Jason. This, reorientation,

of course, is guided by your sense of towards.

Fifth is the field of liberty. Just because you don't like Jason now doesn't mean you always will. For example, when he laughs and says he was joking, perhaps you could distance and reorient your apprehensions of him yet again. The field of liberty ensures that we are always open for further distance and reorientation.

Sixth is retention. This is what keeps us dwelling in the real thing. We don't just walk away from our encounter with Jason and never remember it again, but we keep thinking about it, and this tension between the primordial and ulterior apprehensions of him may linger on.

Let's use another gruesome example to put this together. Let's say you don't know what the radioactive decay sign looks like. You see it and apprehend "cool looking sign!" before entering a place chocked full of radiation. Your primordial apprehension is "cool looking sign!" However, upon experiencing a case of radiation poisoning, your doctor tells you what that sign means, so you draw the connection between "cool looking sign" and "danger," which is a function of the ulterior apprehension. Next time you see that sign, you don't primordially apprehend "cool looking sign!" rather you apprehend "danger!" Thus, logos has connected sign with danger.

The immense pain you feel from radiation poisoning ensures that this interaction, this remaining in both primordial and ulterior apprehensions, is quite strong. The towards has guided your association between radioactive sign, radiation poisoning, and danger. Distance weakened the strength of the primordial apprehension "cool looking sign" and reorientation forged a new connection between "sign" and "danger." Your field of liberty ensures that perhaps there are moments in which you see the sign and don't think "danger," such as when seeing a person wear a t-shirt with the radiation sign on it. This whole process lingers in your memory, thus it is retained.

Okay, we've covered a lot of ground about logos in this episode. Next time we'll talk about what judgment is. Until then, have a great day and God bless you.

### **Episode 6: What is Judgment?**

Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, -s and -s, welcome to Clarifying Catholicism. This is part 6 of a series on Xavier Zubiri's *Sentient Intelligence*. To view the other parts of the series, check the playlist in the description! Without further ado, enjoy the show!

As always, let's review what we've discussed so far. At the beginning of our quest for knowledge, we apprehend things primordially, or simply, as a unified thing, meaning we don't relate them to other things. I see a forest and I think "forest", and nothing else. Not "forest is big" nor "forest is a collection of trees." Just "forest."

Humans and animals both experience simple primordial apprehension. Once we begin relating things to each other, something only humans can do, we are formalizing content into reality via the ulterior apprehension. There are two types of ulterior apprehensions: the first is called logos. Logos is what connects primordial apprehensions together. I apprehend tree. I apprehend green. My logos connects them so I can say "tree is green." Logos is a physical function of our physical senses and organs. This is opposed to the classical understanding of logos as a spiritual director of the universe that governs the physical world. And because Logos is a physical apprehension that involves physical senses, it is dynamic.

That network of things connected by the logos is called reality. Reality is shaped by all of our physical senses and apprehensions, including logos. This makes reality an immanent and physical, rather than a spiritual construct. And like all physical constructs, realities are dynamic. I have my reality and your reality. Now, that make it seem like reality is relativistic. It's not. Remember that just as we don't control our physical pain receptors when we stub our toes, we also don't control our physical



sense of towards that determines the connections between things that is made via logos. Zubiri defines reality as formalized content. All of our senses that formalize, including what are traditionally referred to as mental senses, not only respond to but are shaped by real content. This makes reality dynamic but dependent on the real.

Ok. Now we're all caught up. Now, let's talk about judgment. Before we understand judgment, we must understand unreality, and we will count on an example to illustrate just what that is.

Let's say you've never seen a match before in your life, and I show you one without striking it against a matchbox. Perhaps you would apprehend the unlit match as light, thin, wooden, and pointy. So, you think that this match is just some fancy looking toothpick. You pick one up and use it as a toothpick. All of the sudden I strike it against a matchbox and it lights on fire. This new apprehension causes you to mentally step back. Suddenly, you aren't so sure about the properties of this piece of wood you thought was a toothpick.

Remember that reality is defined as formalized content. Before seeing that piece of wood strike the box and catch fire, you formalized that content as a toothpick. Upon apprehending that it is much more than a toothpick, that formalization breaks. At first, when you apprehended piece of small, pointy, wood, you placed it in a field and connected it, via logos, to toothpicks.

But now that you've seen what happened to that piece of wood that caught fire, that comfy connection drawn by the logos is shaken. Is this really a toothpick? If it is, could it be that your understanding of how wood works is totally wrong? If not, what could this piece of wood really be? This breakdown, this questioning, this doubt of that connection between wood and toothpick, this breakdown of previously formalized content organized by logos, is called unreality. Unlike a lot of classical metaphysics, the opposite of reality isn't nothing. The opposite of reality, which Zubiri defines as formalized content, is a breakdown or weakening of that formalization:

unreality. Basically, unreality occurs when we are forced to re-formalize content in reality.

Unreality has three moments: disrealization is when a thing is dislodged from reality. It is when you are aware that what you thought was a fancy looking toothpick wasn't really a toothpick at all. The second moment is actualization of reality in simple or primordial apprehension. This is when you try to reorient a thing in reality by guessing what could be an explanation. Perhaps the toothpick was lit by some magical powers I store in my fingers. Or perhaps it was lit because it was a hot day. These various options of how the apprehension is situated in the rest of reality is called what Might Be. But then, one option seems to answer your question. What if that tip on the end of this toothpick looking thing had some chemicals in it that reacted once it was struck against the matchbox. This idea seems most likely, so you have attained a free realization of reality, the third and final moment of unreality.

Finally, we arrive at judgment. This whole process of settling on a might be is called a judgment, and that judgment is dependent on the real's ability to convince us of a Might Be's viability in being a worthy actualization of reality. For example, if I thought that water might be what caused the match to light, dunking water on it would cause me to discard that option as a realization of reality. Or even simpler, if I glance at this cup and then look away, I could judge that I was looking at the cup two seconds ago, or perhaps I will judge that the cup was an illusion and it never really was there. A key point that Zubiri makes is that a judgment always concerns apprehensions that have already happened. The constellation of reality, as in the connections between things, have already been formed. Judgment doesn't form those connections; it merely affirms them.

That said, judgments don't always concern the relationship between two things. That was a mistake of traditional metaphysics. In traditional metaphysics, judgments are usually associated with the soul

confirming a propositional statement about two things: such as “fire is hot.” Zubiri states that this is not the case. Not all judgments involve two things. In fact, the most basic judgments, since judgments are merely affirmation of a thing’s reality, involve one thing. Before we can make a judgment about fire causing heat, we make a judgment that that fire even exists. This is called a positional judgment. It’s when you affirm “fire!” or “hot!”

A propositional judgment is when a thing is affirmed in relation to another thing without qualifying their relationship to each other. “Fire-hot!” You affirm the reality of both fire and heat without directly relating them to each other. Finally, a predicative judgment involves positional verbs. It positions or orients the two things to each other. “Fire is hot!” The “is” in this sentence expresses three things: it expresses the event of feeling heat that you just witnessed, the existence of a connection between fire and heat, and the nature of the relationship between fire being hot.

Judgment is an intellective movement, and it’s one that doesn’t lead to satisfaction, rather it generates more questions. When we make a judgment, the judgment generates what Zubiri calls an intentional expectation. So, you’ve figured out that the matchbox caused the match to light. But why did this happen? Is the matchbox itself magic? Or is it a chemical reaction? If so, what chemicals are involved? Why do those chemicals behave the way they do? How do those chemicals interact with other objects? What is the molecular composition of those chemicals? Could you find those chemicals in other things? See how making a judgment leads to more and more questions. In a certain sense, the more you know, the less you know.

Let’s review. Before you even make a predicative judgment, you make a positional judgment that you feel heat. This judgment that you feel heat generates a question as to what could be causing it. So, you pro-pose this judgment, that you feel heat, in relation to another judgment you

make, that you see fire. But you wonder what the relationship between heat and fire could be. This question compels you towards a predicative judgment, that the fire causes heat, or that it “is hot.” And even after this predicative judgment, you might ask why the fire causes heat, to which you could give another predicative judgment that fire is made of chemicals that cause heat. From there you can ask about what the chemicals are made of, and so on. The point is that our judgments begin from basic observations about the real and lead us to ask an infinite horizon of questions about reality.

The questions generated by judgment require evidence to be satisfied, and those evidences are provided by the real. Basically, judgments answer questions, but those answers demand even more answers. Thus, we arrive at the infinite horizon of knowledge.

Next episode we will take a step into the heart of intellective activity, which is truth, itself. Until then, have a great day and God bless you.

### **Episode 7: What is Truth? Part 1**

We’ve arrived at truth! Or perhaps more accurately, we are producing truth, as I’ll explain later. Before we go any further, let’s review a few other terms we’ve studied so far. Remember that what makes Zubiri’s vision radically different from classical philosophers is that he believes that reality isn’t something to be grasped or reached for, rather it is something that is all around us that is dynamic. Reality is defined as formalized content. More specifically, it is connecting the dots of different things we have apprehended into a constellation of relationships. This connecting, physical, process is called *logos*. The physicality of reality and *logos* means they, like other physical processes, are dynamic. But just because they are dynamic doesn’t mean they are relativistic or self-determined, rather they are dependent on the real content that shapes them.

If I throw a brick at someone’s head, their mind cannot help but construct the

reality that is pain. If I make a video series about a very dense philosophical system, your mind cannot help but construct the reality that is confusion every now and then. We are at the mercy of the real, which we directly engage with via primordial apprehension or raw stimulation, but the reality that is constructed from the real is not out there. It is around us.

The way in which logos organizes things in reality is via a field. Basically, when you apprehend something it is placed into a relationship among and by other already apprehended things. But that thing doesn't just bend to the whim of other things in the field, rather it generates its own field that impacts other things in the broader field. Think of it like placing a magnet among other magnets; magnet A isn't just affected by magnets B and C, rather magnet A is also affecting magnets B and C. Thus, logos interconnects all the things we've apprehended into one grand field of reality.

Now, just like magnets can repel each other, sometimes there is tension among fields. When there is tension between fields within the grander field of reality, you enter a state of unreality. Zubiri calls it unreality because reality is all about formalizing content, meaning there is a harmony, a coherence, to the relationship between things you apprehend. Unreality, therefore, is a lack of harmony or coherence between things.

How can you tell when something has become dislodged from reality? Think about when you're trying to solve a really difficult puzzle or are questioning a firmly held belief. There's an unsettling, uneasy, sometimes even painful feeling that accompanies these occurrences, which are stimulated by the real. Recall how although it's commonly said that we only have five senses, taste, touch, sight, sound, and smell, Zubiri extends these to include a sense of balance, direction (or towards), and other senses traditionally associated with the mind rather than the body. But because Zubiri, unlike many modern philosophers who profess a rigid distinction between body and mind,

promotes a unity between body and mind, these so-called internal senses are just as physical as the so-called physical ones. In a sense, it's like the body and mind have been given an internal gauge that can tell us when something fits into reality or not. When something's place in reality is being questioned, it has entered unreality. However, when it's place in reality has been affirmed or reaffirmed, we say that a judgment has been made about it.

We've covered how we can tell when something is in a state of unreality. But how do we know that a successful judgment has been made? It's not like we have some sort of physical indicator like sweat that tells us when we are exercising, right? Ladies and gentlemen, I present, truth. Let's step back a little, though.

Now, in episode one, we described how according to traditional metaphysics reality exists outside the physical world and is reachable by the soul. Everything physical is temporary and changing; everything real is fixed and eternal. It's the soul's job, as an extrinsic agent, an alien force to this world, to judge whether or not particular occurrences in the physical plain of existence align with the eternal unchanging realities in the metaphysical plain of existence. When this alignment between physical occurrence and metaphysical reality happens, classical philosophers say that a statement is true. For example, it is true that a boiling tea kettle is hot because when we feel it, the soul draws a connection between that individual sensation of the tea kettle and the unchanging metaphysical quality of heat. That quality of heat, according to classical philosophers, exists independent of all sensation; it is the soul's job to draw the connection between us and that quality, and when it does so, we know that something is true.

This is very problematic to Zubiri. First of all, it relies on the assumption that we do not exist in reality, rather we reach for it. But if reality isn't around us, and our intellects are purely spiritual, how can there be any connection between our senses and intellects at all? Second, it fails to account for

the impact the physical world has upon the intellect's understanding of reality.

Imagine you have only eaten bacon your whole life. No fruits. No veggies. No additive soy products that are destroying our bodies. Nice, right? If you only subsisted on bacon, and someone asked you to define what food tastes like, you would probably limit your definition to something that has the qualities of bacon, since that's all you have ever experienced. Heck, on a subatomic level, your all you can meat diet probably altered something in your taste buds. Somewhere out in the world, maybe someone has only eaten brussels sprouts their whole life, and their definition of food's taste is basically just the qualities of brussels sprouts. You two would have very different definitions of what food tastes like because you experienced two different kinds of food but assumed that your souls had grasped the essence of what food tastes like.

Second of all, if reality is something to be reached for, how do we know when we have reached reality and universal truth? Think of how medieval scientists were so confident that the earth was the center of the universe. They thought that all of their rigorous observations and calculations had led their souls to point to a geocentric universe. However, their intellects were inhibited by their lack of awareness of things that telescopes soon informed them about, yet they thought their souls had grasped truth. In a nutshell, if we believe that truth is what is real, and what is real is outside the mind and accessible via the soul, how do we know when the soul has accessed reality? Medieval astronomers sure thought they did.

Given how in previous episodes we have demonstrated that reality belongs around us, rather than beyond us, the classical definition of truth is no longer adequate. Truth cannot be something external that we reach for. Truth, like reality, is something we are born into. Just as we cannot stop formalizing content, making judgments, and embedding ourselves in

reality, truth too concerns the formalization of content and is not extrinsic to us.

So, what is truth, then? For the ancients and medievals, truth was, indeed an intellectual activity. Zubiri agrees here! But for the ancients and medievals, truth was extrinsic, agreement of thought from the soul and things the body experienced.

Zubiri goes in a different direction. Just as reality is a physical structure, intellection is, too, a physical activity. This means that truth isn't about corresponding to divine forms. So, if truth concerns the intellect but it isn't a non-physical property, how does it occur?

Now, while reality concerns all formalized content, we aren't always cognizant of this formalized content. In fact, a majority of the time, reality forms around us without our awareness of its presence. For example, if I feel warm and notice a house on fire but don't really connect the dots between them, the fact that I feel warm and a house is on fire is placed in my reality, but my intellect is not yet working, since it is not actively relating those two things to each other. Once I say, "Ah! That house fire is causing the heat!" I have brought the reality of the house fire causing heat to an intellectual presence. This observation produces truth.

Here's Zubiri's definition of truth. **Truth is the moment that reality is brought to our intellect's presence.** Basically, while reality is constantly forming around me, regardless of my intellect's participation, truth strictly concerns my intellect's participation in the formation of reality. **Essentially, in that moment reality and intellection coincide, truth is produced.**

This, of course, includes, but is not limited to, judgments. Judgment, as you may recall, is an intellectual activity. It occurs when we are thrown into a state of unreality, when we are forced to question or doubt the connection between two pieces of content in reality. Unreality yields a cognitive dissonance that demands resolution. That resolution is achieved by judgment, an act of the intellect, and that which is

produced, in the aftermath of a judgment, is called truth.

Think of it like this. If you are running around a track, your legs are running. And if your legs are running efficiently, they produce sweat, a physical indicator of exercise. For Zubiri, our intellectual functions are just as physical as things like running, because our intellects are just as physical as things like our noses and mouths. Modern neuroscience confirms this, as the brain is affected by chemicals, hormones, etc. So, just as a good run produces sweat as an indicator to the body that it is working hard, a good math problem or puzzle produces truth as an indicator to the body that it is thinking well.

Statements that meet the requirement of intelligizing, or as Zubiri calls it truthifying, reality well are called true statements.

Now, I want to make it crystal clear that the production of truth is NOT contained to judgments, rather it refers to what is produced in any intellectual activity. Remember that judgments strictly concern apprehensions that have already occurred. They're all about evaluating things that have already happened. But the intellect is constantly working, even when it's not evaluating things we've already done.

Even when we are absorbing raw stimuli, our intellects are at work. This means that the production truth is not something unique to the logos or judgments, rather it occurs in the primordial apprehension, in our raw stimulation, as well. When a flame burns me and I instinctively think "hot!" I'm still intelligizing or truthifying something.

Because this type of truthification concerns raw stimuli to real content, without formalizing it yet, Zubiri calls this type of truth "real truth." And because primordial apprehensions don't concern the formalization of content into reality, rather just raw real content, every primordial apprehension is true. Think of it like this. I touch a flame, and I think "hot!" That's true. I felt hotness. I taste steak and I think "delicious!" That's true. I felt deliciousness. I see a hooded figure on the street and I think "fear!" That's true. I felt fear, Basically, a

way to think about real truth is that it is produced when our intellect responds to real content in the most primitive way. They are our raw, primal, feelings, and those feelings can vary between people. Keep that in mind.

However, once we start connecting things to each other, once we start formalizing content and move away from raw stimuli to sentient intelligence, then we can say some things are true and others are false. This is because we cannot deny our raw, primal, feelings. We can, however, deny their connections to each other once the logos tries connecting them. Think of it like this. I can't deny I feel hot. I can't deny I see ice cubes. I can, however, deny that ice cubes cause heat.

This is how Zubiri approaches the problem of difference, meaning how can people agree and disagree on different things. It is because we can primordially apprehend very different things. What's painful to me might not be as painful to you. What scares me might not scare you. Every person apprehends very different content in very different ways. Hence we have difference. But if we can successfully connect our apprehensions in similar manners, then we can arrive at agreements.

Because it deals with connections between two apprehensions, the type of truth that is produced by strengthened connections in the logos is called dual truth. And dual truth depends on real truth to be sustained.

Think of it like this. I see a hooded figure on a sidewalk approach me. I instinctively feel, or primordially apprehend, fear. Thus, my intellect tells me, "fear!" That fear is undeniable. It is true. However, when I connect that primal feeling of fear to the hooded figure, I say "hooded figure is dangerous", which is an activity of logos, an ulterior apprehension, this connection can be stable or unstable. If I say "hooded figure is dangerous" but it turns out to be a Benedictine monk offering me his finest homebrew IPA, that connection between hooded figure and dangerous would be destroyed, thus rendering the statement false.

Think of dual truth as an indicator, a thermometer, that tells you how strong a connection between things according to logos, is. Just as your arm produces pain when it isn't functioning well, your intellect produces error when it isn't functioning well. And, like pain depends on the real world impacting the arm, error depends on the real world shaping the intellect. Next episode we'll focus more on dual truth.

Until then, have a great day and God bless you!

### Episode 8: What is Truth Part 2

Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, -s and -s, welcome to Clarifying Catholicism. This is part 8 of a series on Xavier Zubiri's *Sentient Intelligence*. To view the other parts of the series, check the playlist in the description! Without further ado, enjoy the show!

Last episode we talked all about truth, and today we will be going more in depth on the topic. But first, let's recap.

Zubiri defines reality as formalized content, and that formalized content is a physical network of physical things connected to each other. Reality's formalization engages all of the senses, from touch and taste to sense of direction, or towards, and balance. And, yes, according to Zubiri, senses like direction and balance are, indeed physical. All senses are physical. There is no gap between senses traditionally associated with material and mental realms. For classical philosophy, the act of intelligizing was a spiritual one, and it **reached for truth**. But that is not the case for Zubiri. Just as the physical process of smelling, which belongs to the nose, produces smell, the process of physically thinking, which belongs to the intellect, **produces truth**. Or, perhaps more accurately, just as sweat is the epidermic actualization of exercise, truth is the intellectual actualization of the real. Just as the skin produces sweat when we exercise our muscles, the intellect produces truth when we exercise our intelligence.

Now, just as each of our senses can respond to the different kinds of

apprehensions, primordial and ulterior, our intellects, too, respond to each of these. Recall that primordial apprehensions are reactions to raw stimulation. I prick my finger and feel "pain!" It's raw sensation. Now, obviously, our body undergoes millions of raw sensations every second. When my intellect brings these sensations to my attention, actualizing them, it produces **real truth**. It is impossible for real truth to err, since it concerns my stimulation, my feelings, in response to things that happen to me.

Ulterior apprehensions are all about connecting things we primordially apprehended to each other. The type of ulterior apprehension that makes these connections is called logos. Affirmations of those connections are called judgments. Since ulterior apprehensions involve multiple apprehensions, Zubiri calls the intellect's actualization of ulterior apprehensions **dual truth**. These can err because they deal with the strength of connections between things in reality. Basically, when a connection between things is strong, our intellect produces truth. When it is weak, it does not.

As we mentioned last episode, if I see a hooded figure on a sidewalk, I primordially apprehend "fear!" My instinctive intellection of fear is true because I did, indeed, feel fear, a simple primordial apprehension. Now, if I said "hooded figure is dangerous," that would be an ulterior apprehension, connecting two things, "hooded figure" and "dangerous," a connection which can change overtime. Thus, in one moment, my intellect can produce dual truth "hooded figure is dangerous" when it actualizes "hooded figure is dangerous," but when he reveals himself to be a Benedictine Monk offers me a homebrewed IPA, my intellect, that connection between hooded figure and danger is weakened, thus this physical feeling of truth is weakened. I am slipping into error if I continue to affirm he is dangerous. Let's talk a bit more about how that happens.

Dual truth belongs to the logos because it concerns these relationships between things. And those relationships

depend upon how real things impress themselves upon us. Think about Zubiri's definition of truth. Truth is the actualization of the real by the intellect. For such actualization to occur, for truth to be produced, the real must impress itself upon us. Just as a real steak impresses itself on my nose to actualize the sense of deliciousness, a real solution to a math problem impresses itself on my intellect to actualize a sense of truth. Thus, it is accurate to say that just as deliciousness possesses the nose when exposed to a real steak, truth possesses the intellect when exposed to a real source of strength for logos. Conversely, when the connections are weakened, the intellect is possessed by error.

But how are these connections built by the logos strengthened? It all has to do with how real truth, which is produced by primordial apprehensions, interacts with dual truth, which is produced by ulterior apprehensions.

Real truth, which is the real intellectual presence of real content, or basically the intellect's bringing of real content into presence, responds to the three dimensions of reality: totality, coherence, and durability.

Totality means that everything in reality can be considered as a whole. The intellect actualizes totality as manifestation, as in I apprehend forest, and my intellect tells me "forest!" If I, in my ulterior apprehension, claim "forest is red" and then primordially apprehend "fire", that manifestation of fire will change my ulterior apprehension to be "forest is red when it is on fire."

Coherence means that everything in reality is interconnected. The intellect actualizes coherence as firmness, which is the strength of a thing's conceptual unity. This means if I say "all trees are purple" in the ulterior apprehension, but I primordially apprehend a green tree, that primordial sense of firmness that tethers tree to purple is shaken.

Finally, there is durability, which is how impactful the primordial apprehension and real truth is on the ulterior apprehension and dual truth, thus producing constataion. If I pass a red-brick house on my

way to work and someone asks me what it was made of, I probably won't be able to say, as it wasn't a very durable apprehension, hence my intellect produced very little real truth. However, if that house was on fire and caused a massive traffic jam, it would have had quite the impression on me, thus producing a significant amount of real truth, which would lead me to ulteriorly apprehend "the house was made of bricks."

So, I've described how real truth from primordial apprehensions greatly impacts dual truth. But what are the ways dual truth is produced? This sense of dual truth that comes from the intellectual actualization of the real, or truthification, comes in three forms: authenticity, conformity, and verification.

First, there is truth as authenticity. This occurs when we move from raw stimulation to forming concepts about them. Basically, the process of intelligizing or truthifying something begins with an apprehension of the real that translates that raw stimulus into a concept. This is what etches our raw stimuli into reality. I feel pain of fire, and my intellect actualizes "fire is painful!", thus producing truth. Because truth as authenticity involves placing the concept into reality, this concerns logos, which is the first kind of ulterior apprehension.

Second is truth as conformity, which concerns judgment. Once the raw stimulus is etched into reality, we begin making judgments about that concept. Recall that judgments concern things we already apprehended. Maybe it wasn't fire that caused the pain. Maybe it was the stinging nettle I had sat in while I was around the campfire. Thus, whereas truth as authenticity is produced when things are placed into reality, truth as conformity is produced when judgments are made about those prior truths.

Finally, there is truth as reason, which is when we attempt to move beyond our field of actualized apprehensions and attempt to explain them. It's the why moment. Now, remember that logos only concerns things we've already apprehended. It

doesn't generate new apprehensions, rather it deals with connecting existing ones. Thus, truth as reason concerns the second type of ulterior apprehension, reason, which we will cover later in this series.

Again, dual truth is the moment of intellectual presence of reality. In layman's terms, truth is produced when our intellect participates in the actualization of reality. When our intellect struggles to do so, we are in a state of error. When we encounter a math problem that's just too hard, when we are presented with a study that shakes our understanding of a subject, when we begin to question a deeply held belief, our intellect stops producing truth, or perhaps more accurately we stop being possessed by truth. When we profess an answer to a problem that doesn't fit in the rest of our conceptualization of reality, when we willingly turn a blind eye to evidence, we become possessed by error. It's a terrible feeling, and I'm sure you've felt it before when you got a bad test score or lost an argument.

Recall that the sense of towards is what compels us to connect things to each other. I hold this mug and my sense of towards compels my intellect to connect mug with heaviness. But these connections do not exhaust the qualities of the thing; if anything they create more questions. They instill a desire to know what causes the mug to be heavy. And not only does towards instill a desire to know what causes the mug to be heavy, but it provides us with a direction to answer that question as well. It doesn't just leave us hanging! Towards impresses our intellect to move in a certain direction. And those possible resolutions to the question are called guesses, and those guesses are a series of might bes. Maybe it's plastic? Maybe it's metal? And the more interactions, or simple apprehensions, I get with the mug, the more the real content of the mug directs my sense of towards to narrow down which might be my intellect will settle on. Because of this, Zubiri says that primordial apprehensions, which are rooted in the real, produce a directional

focus. A directional focus is composed of a direction and a demand for resolution. I'm not satisfied with thinking this mug might be ceramic or might be metallic. I need to know what it is.

At the end of this process, there is either a resolution, in which I confidently say that this mug is, indeed, clay, or there is what Zubiri calls directional polyvalence, in which case I give up and say it might be clay or it might be plastic. Basically, I give up.

Let's take a more serious example. In 1781, William Herschel discovered Uranus. Ok. Maybe serious isn't the best word I could've used there. Anyways, along with the discovery of the seventh planet came studies of its features. Many judgments were made about the planet, thanks to the ability of the logos to unite qualities with each other. However, with studies of its features came more questions about the planet, which demonstrates how the more answers we have, the more questions arise. More specifically, its orbit was kinda wonky. The odd shape of its orbit obviously showed that scientists were missing some information about the unfortunately named planet, as well as the rest of the solar system. This lack of data, which comes from engagement with real content, threw the judgments made via logos into serious question.

This lack of explanation of the planet threw scientists into a state of unreality, meaning their prior formalizations of the planet's content were severely weakened. Their sense of towards, specifically the notion that all planetary orbits can be explained by other astronomical bodies, compelled them to look for answers from various might be's. Perhaps the planet's orbit was weird because it was hit by an asteroid? Perhaps it had something to do with its composition? The more scientists studied the planet, primordially apprehending it using instruments again and again and connecting those simple primordial apprehensions to existing ulterior apprehensions, they gained a directional focus until



in the early 1840s they settled on an answer:

The weird orbit of Uranus must have been caused by another, even larger, planet beyond it. This was confirmed by a final primordial apprehension in 1846, in which Neptune was observed through a telescope based on mathematical calculations of where scientists predicted it would have been. At that moment, when their judgment was confirmed by real data, truth was produced by their intellects.

Notice how truth was not produced, however, until real data, given by real things, compelled the scientists to render a definitive judgment. Thus, perhaps it is more accurate to say that, just as the pain of a bee sting possesses its sufferer, the truth of a discovery possessed the observers.

This does mean three things:

First, you might think that Zubiri says that truth is based on a feeling. That is not really accurate. Truth is intellectual actualization, just as sweat is epidermic actualization or sight is the actualization of your eye. It is, indeed, a physical moment. It means when the intellect is at work, it produces truth, just as when your eyes are at work, they produce sight. The production of truth can vary between people. I can have my truth and you can have yours, just as you see and smell certain things and I see and smell other things. If I grow up in the Saharan desert and you grow up in the Arctic tundra, the way our bodies respond to temperature will be a bit different. Likewise, if I grow up in a heliocentric society and you grow up in a geocentric one, we will likely intelligize or truthify differently. However, just as a five hundred degree flame will burn any human's skin, regardless of their background, an excellent argument will singe itself into our intellects, thus producing alignment of truths between people. And this alignment of truths is NOT dependent on whoever more powerfully wills truth. Truth cannot be willed. Truth is our intellectual participation in the process of forming reality, which is totally reliant on the content we are provided with. Hit any

person with a brick in the face, and that real apprehension will undoubtedly arouse the same intellectual response, the same truth, of "ouch! That hurts!" Thus, truth, like reality, is dynamic but at the mercy of the real.

Second, it is possible for something to be true one moment and false another. When a set of connections in reality snugly fit, the intellect produces truth to indicate that this reality is adequate. And, as we discussed in our episode on judgment, the more judgments we make, the more questions arise. The more questions arise, the more our fragile network of reality is challenged. The more our fragile network of reality is challenged, the more hypotheses can propose alternative solutions. The more alternative hypotheses are proposed, the greater the odds we either stubbornly ignore evidence or insist on our outdated models of problem-solving. The more we do this, the more we fall from being possessed by truth into being possessed by error. Thus, adequacy is quick to change, but it does mean that something can be true in one moment and erroneous in another. Or perhaps, it means something can be true in one network of propositions and erroneous in another. Let's look at some examples:

For example, if I said that Mars is the first planet from the center of the solar system, it would be true IF I used a geocentric model of the universe. But a geocentric model of the universe only gets us so far in astronomy, thus clinging onto it would lead to much error. Or if I said that one plus one equals ten, it would be true IF I was counting in binary. But counting in binary would get pretty old pretty fast, meaning it would, too, produce much error. Thus, some frameworks work better than others, as a scientist working with a geocentric model of the universe or a mathematician counting in binary will likely fall into error.

So, pretty much every statement we can come up with works within a pre-existing framework at some point. Saying "I think Tommy stole my lunch" is true if the evidence I have produces truth. But if it is proven otherwise and I stubbornly continue

to believe it, then I fall into error. And when that proposition ceases to function within the constellation of other apprehensions, it becomes false.

I think it's important to make a distinction. What a person says and what a person means aren't always the same thing. In particular, when I say something like "the world is flat," my meaning is more accurately "based on my observations, I believe that the world is flat," which is true. This conviction of mine has produced much truth. HOWEVER, if I am shown enough examples to demonstrate that this is not the case, if I am unable to answer the mountains of evidence that show that the world is not flat, if I turn a blind eye to all doubts that alternative hypotheses might raise, then I cease to participate in truth and what I participate, instead, in error.

The third potentially uncomfortable thing is that the way we formalize content into reality is subject to change. Unlike Thomas Aquinas, Aristotle, or even the rationalists like Descartes, most scientists and philosophers today believe in a dynamic universe. Not only are the laws of physics changing, I mean the way physics worked a microsecond after the big bang is different from how they work today, but the way our brains work is changing, too. Most scientists agree that we, like all animals, participated in evolution, meaning the way we formalized content at the dawn of humanity is different than we do now. Even today, different cultures formalize some content differently than others; people from warmer climates, for example, tend to have higher body temperatures than those from colder ones. People with less exposure to seafood tend to be allergic to it more. Millions of years ago, we used this organ called an appendix to digest raw food. Today we don't really use it. Scientists claim that thousands of years from now, we will have bigger thumbs, wider eyes, and possibly technology integrated into our biology. Like it or not, but these things will impact our sense organs, which will impact the way we formalize content, which will, in turn,

impact truth. If a terrible disease eliminated the eye's capacity to see the color blue, then the statement "the sky is blue" would cease to be true, since the intellect would cease to formalize it as such.

This sometimes makes people uncomfortable because it kinda seems like you know something is true if it feels true. Surprisingly, though, this idea of the feeling of truth captivating the observer and inspiring a sense of fulfillment isn't anything new. Especially in Platonic philosophy, many classical philosophers believe that what is true is what is beautiful, and it is beauty that captivates the eye of the beholder.

In the Catholic tradition, St. Paul says that God's law is written on our hearts, and although we might not have a magical cricket to tell us right from wrong, I am thoroughly convinced that deep in our hearts and minds we know when we are rejecting reality and thus, not participating in truth.

Thus, truth is not static. It is not fixed. It is not rigid. It is dynamic. It is fluid. And it is not something we reach for. It is something we participate in. That said, it is not bendable to human whims. It is not a psychological, nor is it a sociological construct as modern philosophers would say. Remember that the problems posed by apprehensions can only be resolved by a reorganization of reality, which depends on situating content that is given to us by the real. Truth might be dynamic but it is not whatever we want it to be. Truth answers to reality, and reality rests upon the real.

Going forward, when I speak about truth, I'll mostly be referencing dual truth, since that is the truth that is produced by the intellection, and our series is all about explaining sentient intelligence.

Phew! That's enough about truth. Next episode we will move on and talk about being. Until next time, God bless you!

### **Episode 9: What is Being?**

Before we jump into being, I wanted to mention a brief method by which truth is produced by the intellect. I've found this useful, though before you listen to this

episode, I strongly recommend reviewing our explanation of truth in the previous two episodes. As a brief refresher, truth is the intellectual actualization of reality. This means that while the actualization of reality, which is the formalization of content, involves all the senses, from taste, to touch, to balance, to temperature, to direction/towards, truth is strictly concerned with the intellectual sense of reality. And remember, intellection, just like all senses, is a physical activity.

There are two types of truth: real truth and dual truth. Real truth is our intellect's actualization of raw stimulation, or primordial apprehension. For example, touching a stove produces "hot!" It can never err because it simply refers to raw sensations we feel. Dual truth is our intellect's actualization of stimulations that have been placed in reality in reference to each other. For example, after touching the stove I can say "stove causes hotness." The logos, which is an ulterior apprehension, connects separate things in reality. When those connections are strong, the intellect produces truth, much like when eyes are strong they produce sight, or when muscles are strong they produce sweat. When those connections are weak, they produce error. There are nine phases of truth. Let's go through them one by one:

*First*, a thing is apprehended as an individual thing in the primordial or simple apprehension. The intellect's actualization to the simple apprehension is real truth. I apprehend beverage.

*Second*, a thing is apprehended among other things. The intellect is no longer concerned with one thing but multiple things. I apprehend thing one, beverage. I place it in the field of reality among other beverages, such as soda, water, wine, and bacon milkshakes.

*Third*, there is an association between multiple things. Something about the beverage causes me to associate it with certain beverages more than others. If the beverage is purple, I will likely place it closer to wine and grape juice than beer or water.

*Fourth*, the connection between things one and two is made: purple beverage is wine. But because this is just based on a limited amount of apprehensions that require more apprehensions for confirmation, I can only say that beverage seems like wine.

*Fifth*, this seeming of purple beverage being wine, which comes from my intellect, produces a demand for evidence that it is, indeed, wine. Without the satisfaction of this demand, there is doubt. There is a lack of truthification and a lack of truth.

*Sixth*. When I taste it, and it tastes like wine, a coincidence between the seeming and real apprehension of the taste of wine produces truth. This purple beverage is, indeed wine.

*Seventh*. This coincidence between seeming, which was from the intellect, and reality is re-embedded into my field of apprehensions. The connection between purple beverage and wine is strengthened!

*Eighth*. The resituation or reinforcement of wine into the field, caused by the experience of tasting it, produces what Zubiri calls truth as conformity between what seems and what really is. When you say something is true you are really expressing something that conforms to reality. You say "this is wine" because your tasting of wine satisfies any doubt that the drink could've been anything else. This affirmation of the connection between this and wine is an act of judgment.

*Ninth*. Perhaps you didn't get a good enough taste of the beverage and you need another sip to go through this whole process again. When you take another sip of wine, the truth as conformity, grows stronger... and stronger... and stronger (grabs whole bottle). This repetition of the whole process produces adequacy, and the more you experience something and subject it to the process, the more adequate your judgment is. And it doesn't have to be the same exact test you submit the wine too. You can smell it, you can use tools to measure its alcohol content, or you can give

it to priests and see if they can successfully consecrate it.

Okay, that was our refresher on truth. We've talked a lot about truth and reality. But what about being?

So, according to classical philosophy, beginning with Parmenides, it was assumed that being is whatever is real, and whatever is real is true. We've already explored how what is real cannot be what is true, since reality and truth are distinct, the latter being formalized content and the former being an intellectual product. But is being just what is real?

What would it mean for being to be whatever is real? According to Zubiri, even animals can tell if a thing is real or not. No ancient philosopher, however, would say that animals can grasp what a thing's being is, though. Thus, being must be something else; something that belongs to human intellection. Being concerns what things are, meaning how they are defined. Whereas reality speaks to the formalization of all content, and truth concerns what this process intellectually produces, being is concerned with the definitions that are formed in that intellectual process. Being is a thing that is actualized in reality.

Recall that when a thing is actualized in reality, it is actualized among other things, meaning it gets its definition from the surrounding things in reality it is associated with. In short, being is a thing as actualized respective to other things.

This is crucial because, in classical philosophy, reality, truth, and being aren't accessible via intrinsic, physical, human functions, rather they belong to the realm of souls. Like, this bookshelf is a bookshelf because its physical occurrence aligns with the spiritual form of bookshelf-ness. This is commonly referred to as correspondence theory, as the particular instance of seeing cup corresponds to the essence of cup that exists in the realm of spiritual universal beings.

Zubiri and modern philosophers take issue with this for a few reasons. First of all, as we've hammered in multiple times, it

makes no sense to say that reality exists outside of the physical world. Reality is around us, and it is unwise and problematic to assume that it isn't. Second, if something's being is whatever our souls told us it is, then all cultures would arrive at similar definitions of things. But that isn't necessarily the case. One culture's chopsticks are another culture's weapons. Third, if the soul told us what something is, then we would be satisfied with having reached what that something is. But as we've discussed earlier in the series, all knowledge produces more questions. Finally, our definitions of things are dependent upon our knowledge of other things. You don't arrive at an understanding of what a cup is by sitting there and thinking about it. You have to juxtapose it against other things, like the liquid it can hold and the jail cells it can scrape against. Plus, we've already demonstrated that a person's environment impacts their intellection, such as a Saharan native considering 120 degrees Fahrenheit as hot whilst an Alaskan native considering 45 degrees as hot.

Simply put, according to Zubiri, a thing's being is basically is how it relates to other things that are in the network of reality. **And a thing's being is defined by the sense of towards that reality impresses upon the intellect via the thing's interaction with other things.** I know this cup's being because I've apprehended the cup interacting with other things, which situates the cup in the network of reality. The cup's place in reality, its relation to other things, like liquid and tables, in turn, tell me what it is. Basically, we define things based on how they interact with other things. Being is relational and depends on things like utility and culture. Thus, according to Zubiri, being, like truth and reality, is dynamic, whereas for classical philosophy, being is static, fixed, rigid, and universal, and for modern philosophy being is in our mind alone and it shapes reality over time. Specifically, for Freidrich Hegel, being determines reality, whereas for Zubiri, reality determines being.

Next episode we will get into what reason is. Until then, have a great day and God bless you!

### **Episode 10: What is Reason?**

At this point in the series, we've drawn distinctions between reality, truth, and being, which Zubiri claims had never been adequately done before in Western philosophy.

According to the classical and scholastic worldview, reality, truth, and being are pretty much the same things, and they are located outside the physical realm. The body delivers jumbled content for the soul to abstract its reality, truth, and being. This is problematic because it implies a static universe whose reality is solely shaped by the soul, rather than the body. It not only assumes that truth is something to be accessed, but it struggles to respond to the problems of how different cultures could arrive at different truths and why we, once achieving truth, seek further inquiry if that truth should satisfy our curiosities.

Modernity may have taken the soul out of philosophy, but it merely replaced it with the mind. While classical philosophy believed that the soul accessed reality, truth, and being, modern philosophy believed that the mind *constructed* reality, truth, and being. Thus, like classical philosophy, reality, truth, and being were things to be achieved, and the lowly body remained entirely subject to the almighty mind.

For Zubiri, reality, truth, and being are not extrinsic to our physical world, nor are they constructed by our minds, rather they are baked into the physical world that we participate in, not reach for, every day. Additionally, reality, truth, and being are distinct, though they are united by the real content that shapes them. Reality is the formalization of real content, truth is what the intellect produces in this formalization, and being is the actualization of things in reality as they are related to other things. All three of these are very material processes and things that we participate in, just as we

participate in smelling, tasting, touching, etc.

Today, we're going to cover reason. Remember that while primordial apprehensions concern individual apprehensions of the real, ulterior apprehensions concern uniting these individual apprehensions. There are two kinds of ulterior apprehension. The first is *logos*. This is when primordial apprehensions are placed among each other and in reference to each other. This placement of things in reference to each other causes the intellect to produce two kinds of dual truth: truth as authenticity and truth as conformity. Reason produces its own unique kind of truth, but before we go into that, let's review the two that belong to *logos*.

First, there is truth as authenticity. This occurs when we move from raw stimulation to forming concepts about them. Basically, the process of intelligizing or truthifying something begins with an apprehension of the real that translates that raw stimulus into a concept. This is what etches our raw stimuli into reality. I taste wine, and my intellect actualizes "delicious!", thus producing truth. Because truth as authenticity involves placing the concept into reality, this concerns *logos*, which is the first kind of ulterior apprehension.

Second is truth as conformity, which concerns judgment. Once the raw stimulus is etched into reality, we begin making judgments about that concept. These judgments concern connecting that authenticated truth to other authenticated truths. "Wine", one concept "causes deliciousness," another concept. Because truth as conformity involves connecting concepts to each other, this also concerns *logos*.

Now here's the thing. Our knowledge isn't limited to a set number of apprehensions between things. It's not like our knowledge is contained to the connections we've drawn from things we've apprehended. It's not like I can say "wine is delicious" and my knowledge of wine is restricted to that. Wine is not just cemented to deliciousness, isolated from other

apprehensions I've made. Recall that judgments raise more questions than answers. If I make the judgment "wine is delicious," I might ask "what causes wine to be delicious"? And the neat thing about this third type of truth, truth of reason, is that it doesn't need additional apprehensions to work. First, something doesn't need to prompt me to ask "why is this wine so delicious." I just do it on my own. Then, to answer that question I don't need to directly apprehend an answer to this question, rather I can expand my field of reference to include many potential answers.

Think of it like this. In the primordial apprehension, I only deal with thing A, wine. In the logos, I deal with things A and B, "wine is delicious." Because of reason, though, I not only desire to connect things A and B, wine and deliciousness, but I seek to explain the connection between things A and B. I then bring in different things as possibilities, things C, D, E, F, etc., as hypotheses to satisfy this "why." Maybe it's good grapes that caused the wine to be good. Maybe it was good soil. Maybe it was from a river Jesus crossed a long time ago. The point is that reason not only searches for explanations of the connections established via logos, but it brings in a seemingly infinite number of possibilities to satisfy that search.

Thus, we arrive at our definition of reason. Reason is the ulterior apprehension of taking all the interconnections we've made via logos, searching for more connections, and exploring different possibilities to explain them. For example, if I apprehend tree and apprehend green, logos might connect the two things, tree and green, to each other, but it won't go much further than making these connections. We have this desire, which comes from reason, to explain what makes tree green. Reason then attempts to satiate this desire. Maybe someone painted it green. Maybe chemitrails from the government made it green. Maybe there's something in its chemical composition that makes it green.

Now, reason bases itself on the apprehensions we've gained from logos, thus it is intimately connected with reality and does not go above reality. If anything, reality gives reason the ingredients to come up with explanations for how things work. Thus, reason is dependent on logos, and logos is dependent on primordial apprehension, which of course is dependent on real content.

Now, reason has three moments. First is inquiry or searching. This means that reason has an inquisitive character. The second is in-depth intellection, which means its search is for a more thorough understanding of reality. The third is called intellectual measuring. This means that reason not only sets up its own searches or problems, but it determines the conditions by which that search will be resolved. If reason compels me to figure out how many jelly beans are in a jar, it also dictates the conditions by which I'll figure that out, which is counting the jelly beans. The most deep seeded of these measures by which we reason are called principles.

Reason is not logical rigor, as many of the Greeks, scholastics, and Leibniz held. That would mean we could connect all these apprehensions just by thinking of them, which isn't how knowledge works. We have to experience, to primordially apprehend, things in order to connect them.

Reason is not the supreme judge of reality, as Kant held, since reality shapes reason, not the other way around.

Finally reason is not an unfolding of concepts over time that shapes reality, as Hegel would say. Again, this would make reality dependent upon reason, whereas reason is dependent upon reality.

All three of these philosophical systems are mistaken in their identification of reason with judgment. Reason is not judgment. Reason is our in depth organization of reality that involves judgments but is not identical with judgments. Remember. Judgment is just the affirmation of things connected in reality; it is not the connection

between things, themselves. Thus, while reason involves judgment, it goes beyond merely affirming things by generating more and more questions and pursuing answers. This endless thirst for knowledge was explored in our episode on judgment, in which we talked about how one judgment yields more questions; reason is the source of this endless search.

Now, when reason is tasked with measuring real content, we say that there is a problem. That problem has several possible solutions. It is the existence of possibility, the existence of infinite explanations of how the world works, that is the essence of reason. For, it is possibility that causes us to question what could explain the universe to behave the way it does and come up with endless hypotheses to explain it.

This is significant because in classical philosophy, the essence of reason is the soul reaching knowledge of universal truth. This implies that once we reach a true answer, we can cease our search for knowledge. The opposite is true, though. Reason does not reach for anything static; it is a physical ulterior apprehension that operates in a physical, concrete world. The physicality of reason makes it, like logos, dynamic. And its dynamism causes it to be open to searching for endless possibilities of answers.

On the other hand, when modern philosophers, particularly existentialists, set possibility as the cornerstone of knowledge, they did so assuming that we can self-determine the answers to our own questions. This means if I wonder what essence of tree, or steak, or animal, or human, or fetus, or gender is, I have the power to determine it myself. This is NOT what Zubiri says, though. The existence of possibility comes from real content, and the answers to questions that we settle on depend on evidence given by the real. So, although possibility might be what drives reason's search and provide it with options, only real content can satisfy that search.

Next episode, we will wrap up everything we've learned to answer the

epistemological question that Zubiri set out to answer in his book: how do we know things?

### **Episode 11: How do we Know Things?**

Here we are! We're approaching the end of our series on Xavier Zubiri's Sentient Intelligence. We can finally answer the question he and other epistemologists have asked for centuries: how do we know things?

Knowledge, according to Zubiri, is an expansion of our intellection. All intellection involves primordial and ulterior apprehensions, the latter of which is constituted by logos and reason. Knowledge is concerned with knowing what things are, or what a thing's being is.

In the last couple of episodes, we've drilled in how being is NOT about what a thing is in itself, which is what the classical philosophers defined being as, rather it is a thing as it relates to other things. So, knowledge is a type of intellection, and it's specifically the kind of intellection that explains HOW things relate to each other. Also in contrast to classical philosophy, knowledge is not a reaching for something that ends once we attain it. Otherwise, we would be satisfied with what a thing is once we reach an answer. There wouldn't be much doubt or skepticism. Thus, knowledge doesn't fully satisfy itself.

Knowledge has a few key aspects. The first is objectuality. The word "object" is very ancient, coming from the Latin word "objectum," which is composed of "ob" and "jectum." Ob means to jut or jump out. It's what sticks out to you about something. Jectum means to throw against. Think of a word like "eject." According to Zubiri, object, in its most pure sense, means "that which jumps out at us when something is thrown against other things." Zubiri accuses ancient and medieval philosophers of focusing too much on the ob and less on the jectum, meaning they only seemed to care about what stood out of things, rather than how that standing out emerged from a thing's interactions with others. This led to a flawed understanding that objects are

defined as what things are in themselves, rather than as what they are in relation to other things.

Now, since an object is defined by a thing's relation to other things, to understand the object we have to know where our intellect places it in relation to other things. This position in relation to other things is called a thing's *Positum*, which is Latin for "place." Now, a *positum* is apparent to everyone is called a fact, which is different than other kinds of intellections, such as feeling hungry or feeling hot, which people can internalize differently. For example, two people standing in front of a burning forest can agree about the fact the forest is burning, but one person might feel hotter than the other, which is not a fact.

Now, when we pick a fact and use it to define something, we call that first fact a ground. For example, if we say that the sun is the center of the universe and then say that Mercury is the closest planet to the center of the solar system, Mercury's position rests on the ground that the sun is the center of the solar system. While we do use certain definitions as grounds to build more definitions on, the most basic grounds that form the basis for all our knowledge are engrained into us as infants and children. Hence, every person's grounding depends on their culture, time period, and other contextual factors. And while we accept certain grounds to define other things, it is also the task of knowledge to analyze the strength and validity of those grounds that we began with. Basically, knowledge and its grounds aren't static, rather it evaluates itself and modifies itself.

These facts and grounds rely on the intellect, whose production of truth is the indicator that reality remains stable. Truth authenticates, meaning it converts raw stimuli into things placed in reality among other things. Concept "fire" is instinctively placed among things like heat. Truth conforms, meaning it connects things to each other once they're placed in reality. "Fire causes heat." Finally, truth verifies, or reasons, once those connections have been

drawn. "Fire causes heat because of chemical reactions." And reason never stops searching for new connections and their verifications, meaning reason ultimately searches for a comprehensive knowledge of reality.

All three of these truths, authenticity, conformity, and verification, produce what we call explanations of the world. And verification, in particular, constitutes comprehensive apprehension, or comprehensive knowledge.

To tie things together:

1. Zubiri seeks to build a philosophical system that bridge the gap that began with the pre-Socratics and continued into postmodern philosophy between the physical world and the metaphysical/psychological world. He accomplishes this by asserting that there is no chasm between physical and intellectual activities. All intellectual activities are physical processes, just as smelling and tasting are physical processes.
2. He advocates for a universe whose laws are dynamic, though they are dependent on real content, which makes him a realist.
3. Real Content/Apprehension of Stimuli: all living things, from plants, to animals, to infants, to adults, are stimulated by real content. We call this stimulation primordial apprehension.
4. Reality/Ulterior Apprehension: Only humans, however, connect these stimuli together into a network called reality. The connection between stimuli is called ulterior apprehension.
5. Logos: There are two types of ulterior apprehension. The first is called logos. Logos connects things that have been apprehended together. The connections drawn between things by logos is guided by our physical sense of towards/direction.
6. Judgment: When we make these connections between things via logos, we make judgments. They can be as simple as "Thing A exists" or "Thing A causes Thing B."



7. Truth: Truth is the intellectual moment of reality. While we might constantly be smelling, hearing, and seeing things around us, we aren't always intelligizing them. When we participate in intellectual activities, such as judgments, which are physical processes, our intellect produces truth, just as an arm participating in exercise produces sweat. When connections between things in the logos are strong, the intellect produces truth. When those connections are weakened, the intellect produces error.
8. Being: Being is produced by the intellectual placement of things among each other in the physical world. Because being depends on a thing's placement among other things, being is not static but relies on the pre-existing apprehensions of other things. Since reality is the primary concept, being must be understood with reference to reality, rather than the other way around. Thus, being is actuality of the real in the world; a physical moment of actuality.
9. Reason: Once the logos, aided by all the senses and sense organs but especially towards and intellect, respectively, places things among each other and connects them, our process of thinking does not cease. For we seek explanations for why things are connected, and we draw in apprehensions from all over the place to try and satisfy that search. This is why possibility is the backbone of reason, as it offers us options to satisfy its search.
10. Knowledge: Reason ultimately searches for comprehensive knowledge of all reality. And the resolution of this search depends on the way beings are connected to each other, which depends on the amount of truth produced during that connection's formation. The intellectual connections made by truth are dependent on prior judgments made via the logos, which connects things in reality to begin with. Those connections are entirely at the mercy of real content. Thus, knowledge depends on reason,

which depends on being, which depends on truth, which depends on judgment, which depends on logos, which depends on reality, which depends on real content. Basically, a thing's explanation depends on the real content of said thing. But, since we can never exhaust the totality of said thing, our search for a comprehensive explanation of reality, much less any one real thing, is endless. Basically, the real world is so rich that it not only inspires us to pursue comprehensive knowledge, but it is so rich that we will never reach that which we seek. Thus, knowledge is an infinitely expanding horizon that rests upon the real, but given the fundamental richness of the real, will never be exhausted.

This series has been just the tip of the iceberg regarding Zubiri's *Sentient Intelligence*. Next episode I'll talk about the significance of Zubiri's work, which you can find in the description. Until then, have a great day. God bless you.

### **Episode 12; Significance of Zubiri**

Here we are! The final episode of this series. This episode will serve a three-fold purpose. The first will be to summarize the key problems of western philosophy, many of which we have covered in this series. The second will be to argue that Zubiri's alternative is a viable alternative to these preceding philosophical systems. The third will be to illustrate how Zubiri's work is relevant to tackling a variety of issues, from ethics to theology.

But before we go any further, I'd like to thank a few people for making this series possible. First and foremost, thank you Dr. Thomas Fowler for not only translating Zubiri's *Sentient Intelligence*, and by extension introducing this monumental philosopher to English-speaking audiences, but for reviewing the script for this series and offering critiques of it. Dr. Fowler is the president of the Xavier Zubiri Foundation of North America, and you can find the Foundation's work on [zubiri.org](http://zubiri.org). Second, I'd like to thank Marcos Ybarra Mendoza, a

high school science teacher who introduced me to Zubiri. He also read over this script as well. I'd also like to thank Jose Nunes, a good friend of mine who knew little to nothing about Zubiri but took the time to listen to me read this script to him so I could make sure it was accessible to people with little training in philosophy. Finally, I'd like to thank my roommates for putting up with me constantly talking about being, reality, and truth, whether that was in the context of me picking their brains or if it was at a party or gathering in which I heard someone use these terms incorrectly.

Now, let's revisit the preceding philosophies that Zubiri took issue with. Classical philosophy, beginning all the way back with Parmenides, identified being with reality. Basically, a thing can be defined by its real qualities. At first glance, that seems pretty obvious, but it would seem to imply that some qualities of a thing aren't real. This is because, according to the Greek philosophers, the reality of a thing isn't around us in the physical world, rather it is in the realm of the soul. Physical things around us can change, so we must look to the eternal realm of the soul to tell us what is real and what is illusory, since change is a property of the physical world. Our bodies are inherently limited and can often obscure the eternal and real characteristics of a thing by imposing temporary qualities on them. Hence, when people disagree on something, it is often because their bodies are either getting in the way of the soul's capacity to access reality (Platonism) or are not providing the soul with enough data to access reality (Aristotle). When a soul has accessed reality, something is considered true.

So, we end up with a few problems here. First of all, we assume that reality is beyond the physical world. That is a massive assumption that classical and Scholastic philosophy take for granted. One of my philosophy professors in college once said that one should only ever appeal to God in a state of last resort, and right off the bat we have a fundamental appeal to the divine

as an answer to the question of were reality is and how we can access it.

Second of all, upon making this monumental assumption, we embrace an epistemological system that places WAY too much emphasis on the soul over the body, and this is where cracks really start to form. Thousands of years ago, the ancient Greeks believed that the universe was, more or less, a set of static elements that rearranged themselves for all of eternity. This additional huge assumption, that the universe's laws and elements are static, implies that the human body is subject to a closed set of elements, meaning the material world isn't going to change the way the soul operates and thinks. Since the eternal mind is operating in a world whose elements and laws are fixed, we can arrive at certain knowledge of how the world works. There are several problems with this. Thanks to modern physics and biology, we now know that not only are the universe's laws fluid, given how the universe we know today does not operate according to the same laws it did in its infancy following the big bang, but that the changing laws of the universe have massive impacts upon how we perceive the world. Specifically, the theory of evolution affirms that the way cave-men thought at the dawn of humanity is very different than the way we think today, thanks to neurological changes. Thus, not only are the universe's laws dynamic, but so is the way the mind responds to those laws.

These false assumptions, that the universe's laws and knowledge about those laws is static, led to a great overemphasis on the soul, rather than the body, and it led to an arrogance that certain cultures or later certain religions, were gifted with special access to truth. The Greeks called other cultures barbarians for not "accessing truth" the way they did, and medieval Catholics eagerly appropriated this model of a static universe to claim certain knowledge of things like ethics.

Finally, something has to be said about the distinction between body and soul and

essential versus non-essential characteristics of things. The Greeks and Scholastics rather rigidly distinguished between functions of body and soul, the body eventually becoming a delivery boy of confused content for the almighty soul to sort out. The soul would figure out what components of a thing were essential, or real, like a tree's nature to grow, while the body imposed non-essential characteristics of a thing, like a tree's color or weight. The problem is that modern science has shown us that things like color are just as real as things like leaves and branches, as they are composed of particles such as photons, which are tangible things. So, the distinction between essential and accidental qualities is quite muddled.

Thus, we end up with a system that is too soul-dependent and relies on a static understanding of the universe.

While modern philosophy claimed to reverse these problems, it arguably made the same mistakes and worsened them. It did make one crucial and productive change, which was changing the location of reality from beyond the physical world to inside the physical world. However, this change was, for all practical purposes, nullified by the distinction between the body and mind. Rather than the soul being the supreme organizer and determiner of reality, the mind was now in charge. Specifically, within the rationalist and early empiricist traditions, we end up with models that keep a static universe, of which certain knowledge can be attained. This was arguably worse than the preceding model, though, since at least the ancients accepted the humbling idea that something extrinsic, something beyond the mind, determined reality. The modern philosophers believed that since the mind constructed reality, and by deconstructing it we could achieve enlightenment. Essentially, the moderns thought that by replacing the soul with the mind, they could correct for the mistakes of their predecessors, but in doing so they opened the door for philosophy and ethics to move in a radically subjectivist direction.

It's quite apparent how a philosophical system that prioritizes the mind over the body neglects how physical things beyond the mind shape it over time. The post-Enlightenment skeptics understood this and attempted to, once again, divorce the mind from reality. Immanuel Kant famously did this by claiming we cannot know anything about reality other than the fact that it exists and impacts our perspective of reality. And while the mind, for Kant, was entirely distinct from reality, it still was able to hold certain knowledge about its scope of reality. Kant's model is frequently compared to seeing the real world through tinted glasses. You might be confined to seeing reality through the color of that lens, but you can still make certain statements about that shade of reality. Thus, even though Kant believed we are fundamentally separated from reality, we can still make certain statements about our version of reality. So, we are still left with a static model of the universe.

Freidrich Hegel and the German idealists were the first modern philosophers to embrace the notion that perhaps the universe's laws weren't so static. Maybe the way reality functions has changed over time. This, according to Zubiri, was a step in the right direction, but it was still too dependent upon what was inside the mind. For Hegel and his successors, the human mind shaped itself throughout history; there was an element of self-determination that humans as a species shape their own destinies, their own realities, as an absolute consciousness unfolds throughout history. So, we've shed the flawed notion of a static universe, but we've arrived at a dynamic universe whose reality isn't shaped by things outside the mind, rather it is shaped by our minds, themselves. This is unacceptable to Zubiri because, again, before we can even consciously think, from when we are still in the womb, our minds are shaped by things that are extrinsic to us.

Now, while critical of his predecessors, which you can read about in his *Fundamental Problems of Western Metaphysics*, Zubiri

appreciates and borrows from their qualities. His *Sentient Intelligence* is an attempt to build a philosophical system that is dependent upon the real, meaning that which is outside the mind, without neglecting the mind's role in shaping reality. He embraces a dynamic universe that is understood by a dynamic mind without falling into an idealism or relativism. Finally, he seeks to reunite philosophy as a cornerstone for all other sciences, since the twentieth century's divide between continental and analytic schools led to philosophy's relegation as either existential self-reflection or the study of logic, respectively. Both styles severed philosophy from the hard sciences. Zubiri aimed at bridging that gap by creating a philosophy that is relevant to all other sciences, a feat attempted by Aristotle, whom Zubiri is critical of but admires.

Zubiri builds on his predecessors by accepting Aristotle's emphasis on the real serving as the cornerstone of philosophy. He accepts Renee Descartes's location of reality as inside the mind and he accepts, with modifications. He accepts Immanuel Kant's distinction between our reality and the content that feeds into our reality. He accepts Hegel's dynamic universe and embraces Martin Heidegger's idea of possibility as forming the cornerstone of being and reason. Zubiri's synthesis of all Western philosophy is truly impressive and deserves intense study.

Let's begin this summary of Zubiri's work with his rejection of the great underlying problem that has plagued all of western metaphysics: the identification of reality with being. Reality and being are distinct things and cannot be confused with each other.

Reality is formalized content, meaning it exists inside the mind but is at the mercy of extrinsic real content to shape it. Thus, Zubiri's philosophy is realist, since the content is extrinsic to the mind, but we are immersed in reality, rather than divorced from it. This location of reality within the mind that is shaped by extrinsic content and the body is the basis for Zubiri's radical body-

soul unity, a unity which was never fully realized in western metaphysics, despite the best efforts of philosophers like Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas.

This unification between body and mind, or body and soul, is indeed radical, because unlike any other major western philosopher, Zubiri does not ascribe certain functions to the body and others to the mind/soul. Every sense, whether that be sight, touch, taste, smell, sound, sense of direction, sense of temperature, sense of balance, is a physical one. There is no strict division that certain senses are physical and others are intellectual. All senses are physical; the body and mind are radically unified. Modern science would agree with this assessment, as even things like pleasures, pains, and desires can be explained by chemical balances in the brain, which are physical processes.

Truth, therefore, ceases to be an agreement between our experiences and some mystical reality that is beyond the physical world, and it is instead the result of the intellectual process in actualizing reality. Truth isn't something we reach for, rather it is something produced by our intellectual search; it is something that takes hold of us, as we strive to exercise our intelligence. Think of it like this: when you're doing pushups you are exercising your biceps; an adjective to describe someone's arms as they do one hundred pushups is strong. Likewise, when you are solving a difficult mathematical equation you are exercising your intelligence; an adjective to describe someone's intellect as they solve one hundred equations is true. Truth, though it describes the quality of our intelligence, isn't determined by us as the skeptics like Nietzsche would say. For it is only once we are provided with adequate data and experiences, things which come from real content, are we satisfied and, thus participating in truth. Ultimately, everyone has their own reality, but given enough impressions of content, those realities will intersect, and a sign of that intersection is intellectual

alignment, agreement, that signifies the participation of truth by both parties.

This notion, that different people have different realities that sometimes intersect and sometimes don't, contradicts the idea of a static universe. Zubiri embraces this, though. Having been educated in modern physics, mathematics, biology, and chemistry, he appreciates the idea of a dynamic universe, whose laws change over time, whether that be because of evolution or because the universe is gradually pulling itself apart. This dynamic universe model, which comes from German idealism, is kept in check by Zubiri's realism, though, since, again, our minds are NOT the ultimate determinants of how reality is organized, rather the real content forces our minds to respond a certain way given enough impressions of them.

A thing's being, which is what it is (its definition), is not something we appeal to metaphysical universals for, rather it is a thing's immanent relationship with other things. I do not define this as a cup because it reflects universal cupness. I define it as a cup because of the way it interacts with things around it, because of the way it fits into the constellation of all other things in reality. Being, therefore, is not about appealing to static universals, rather it is about exploring all possible relationships a thing can have with other things. This is a masterful integration of Heideggarian metaphysics into a realist philosophy.

So, Zubiri's philosophy accounts for a universe that is both dynamic and reliant on the real. It accounts for what the empirical sciences have told us about how the laws of physics have changed over time. It incorporates evolutionary theory into philosophy. It integrates neuroscience to tear down the distinctions between physical and so-called intellectual senses, as all senses are physical.

Now, Will, I hear you say. Isn't this channel supposed to be about Catholicism? Yes. Shouldn't you be focused on theology? Well, you can't exactly do theology without a good philosophical framework. The fact is that before we even try to understand God

we must understand the intellectual processes that allow for us to understand anything to begin with. The earliest Christians were largely influenced by Platonism, and when you read the Church Fathers you can tell that most of their language uses Platonic terms and ideas. During the second millennium of Christianity there was a radical and controversial shift to Aristotelian terms and ideas to describe theology. This was spearheaded by Thomas Aquinas and theologians who saw Platonism as outdated and inadequate at accurately describing not only theology but all the sciences, as well. So, for a little less than a thousand years the Church was dominated by Aristotelian metaphysics. Aristotelianism dominated theology until the mid twentieth century, when the Church became open-minded to modern philosophy. This led to much theological infighting in the Church, which, in my opinion, has resulted in a potentially devastating divide.

On the one-hand we have theologians whose embrace of modern philosophy, especially existentialism and Marxism, has eroded the Church's emphasis on tradition and morality. Modern philosophy's emphasis on self-definition and independence has shifted the Church's focus from proper moral formation to a laid back hippy religion where anything goes. And you can see that in the percentage of people who identify as culturally Catholic in America yet hardly agree with the Church's moral teachings. On the other side we have theologians who are clinging to Aristotelian-Thomism. They believe that the acceptance of any modern philosophy was a mistake and the only way to steer the ship on course is to double down on the older paradigm.

I personally believe that both of these models are not only insufficient, but they each pose a grave danger to the Church's mission. Particularly, I believe that Zubiri's work has aptly demonstrated that Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics are no longer a sustainable backbone for theology to rest upon. Essentially, it's time for the Church to move on from a sola-Thomistic approach. Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics make

too many assumptions about how the world functions; they fail to account for a dynamic universe and their overemphasis on the soul threatens to upend the body-soul unity that Christians profess exists. Just as Platonism needed to be replaced by Aristotelianism at the beginning of the second millennium, I believe that Aristotelian-Thomism is no longer sufficient to account for what science tells us about biology, physics, chemistry, and mathematics. We need to shift to a new paradigm or else the divide between philosophy and the hard sciences will continue to bleed into a divide between theology and the hard sciences.

What does a theology of Xavier Zubiri look like, though?

First of all, I believe Zubiri's emphasis on the radical unity between body and soul is much more compatible with the Christian notion of a bodily resurrection. In fact, the idea that our souls will be reunited with our bodies, as well as the notion that God could become human, bothered Greek philosophers so much that they took up the focus of pretty much every early Church council. While Thomas Aquinas argues that the body and soul are in their most natural state when they are united, I'd argue that he makes this argument rather clumsily and begins with an assumption from revelation. It's quite clear that although even for Aristotle the body and soul desire unity, the soul is so incredibly supreme over the body, that it's almost awkward that a perfect state of eternity would involve a unity between them.

Along those lines, Zubiri's unification of the senses as all physical, rather than some being physical and some being intellectual or spiritual, stresses how all of our senses, not just the intellectual ones, are sacred. Again, early Christians, especially Stoic ones, practiced mortification of the flesh. And while mortification has its purpose, I think that the divide between physical and intellectual sensation from Thomism has led to an overemphasis on Catholicism's intellectual side. I meet many young Catholics who, rather than

appreciate the beauty of the world through sensation, focus too much on overanalyzing the world and memorizing lists of doctrines and arguments. They behave as if conformity to God's laws is an intellectual experience. Instead, I prefer the Franciscan approach of appreciating God in all senses, not just so-called intellectual ones. A theology that claims the body is a temple functions better, in my opinion, if the so-called intellectual senses are deemed just as physical as my sense of sight, touch, smell, etc. This also eliminates the scandal of Jesus Christ becoming a human, which the Muslims, who were inspired by Aristotle, took great issue with.

Often, I've heard historians and theologians claim that the Second Vatican Council shifted the Church from having a vertical theology to a horizontal one, meaning old-school theology was focused on establishing a precise set of rigid rules to be followed, whereas more recent theology focuses on the individual's experience of God in their culture or context. I think that Zubiri's definition of truth, which is not something to be grasped but instead is something that takes hold of us, fits in with the Council's mission very snugly. For it is possible for every person to experience God in the process of participating in truth, rather than by memorizing lists of rules. Again, considering truth as something we produce rather than a thing we reach for de-emphasizes the intellectual aspect to Catholicism, which is a good thing considering not everyone has the time to read every single rule. Encounter with God is meant to be a personal experience mediated by the Church, not a rigid path to God dictated by the Church. A horizontal theology needs to rely upon a model of reality and truth that is fundamentally dynamic, not overly rigid.

This, of course, has vast implications in a multicultural world, for it broadens the way people can encounter God. The early Christians had a great appreciation for the role God played in other religions, and you can hear about that in my series about no salvation outside the Church. A lot of that,

in my opinion, was lost in medieval theology, once it had been boldly assumed that everyone in the world had been converted. That assumption, especially with the discovery of the new world, was proven quite false, and theologians scrambled to figure out what the role of people like native Americans were in salvation history. The idea that all people produce truth, regardless of context or creed, broadens the capacity for non-Christians to receive grace from God. This is very important in a multicultural world.

Speaking of which, this notion that reality and truth are not static but dynamic helps answer questions about God's activities throughout history. When you take a look at the Old Testament's laws and compare them to those of the New Testament's, you get seemingly very different theologies. Furthermore, it is a fair question to ask why God would behave so inhumanely or provide us with commandments that He just planned on changing anyways somewhere down the line. If truth and reality really are static, we end up with a God who contradicts Himself. If truth, in particular, is the dynamic unfolding of the intellectual process throughout history, though, then God is allowed to change His laws so long as they contribute to the grander intellectual activity of the human race. In simple terms, a good God, like a loving parent, will not govern His children with the same laws when they are infants than He will when they are teenagers. Thus, God's laws can change whilst staying true, as Zubiri defines truth as intellectual actualization of reality.

On that topic, Zubiri's definition of truth has vast consequences on biblical scholarship. In fact, it's usually the topic of biblical historicity that gets me into discussions of Zubiri with my friends and peers. Most biblical scholars agree that Adam, Eve, Abraham, Moses, and others were mythical and legendary characters. A common objection to this theory would be that if they weren't real then their stories couldn't be true. This is a huge mistake, though. Truth and reality are not the same.

Reality is formalized content and truth is intellectual actualization of that content. Neither of those definitions demand that something be historical to be true. Truth is all about proper intellectual response, formation, and development. Just as a child is raised with fairy tales because he or she cannot distinguish between historical and fictional events, God, being a good and loving father, communicated to His people through myths and legends until they were mature enough to come face-to-face with His historical Incarnation, Jesus Christ.

But God's Incarnation did not end with the death of Jesus Christ. The Incarnation continues to dwell in the Church via the Eucharist. And that persistence of the Eucharist throughout the history of the Church ensures God's presence with us throughout history as His laws are realized and developed by the Church. We did not achieve peak spiritual maturity during the lifetime of Christ; I mean, we kinda crucified the guy. We had and still have a lot of work to do in preparing the Kingdom of God. This process of reflecting on God's laws throughout changing history implies a dynamic universe that is heading towards some absolute end, which, again, fits more with Zubiri's model than the Aristotelian one. I talk a lot about this in my series on Magisterial Development of the Catholic Church.

Speaking of truth, Zubiri's ideas are relevant to ethics. Particularly, questions like "what is a lie" are quite relevant. Responding "truth is what is real" is not valid. Rather, truth as intellectual actualization of reality ensures that we pay more attention to the effect words have on others and their intellectual formation than any literal meaning. Grandma asking you "do you like the pink bunny sweater I knitted you" is actually her asking if you appreciate her work. Likewise, the Nazi asking "are there any Jews in your house" is actually them asking "will you comply with me in killing Jews." Essentially, when someone asks you a question, you can pay attention to the literal words or you can dig deeper to what they are trying to achieve and give them

what they deserve. According to the Zubirian reading of truth, truth is more complex and diverse than a series of literal questions.

There are a myriad of other ways Zubiri's philosophy is compatible with theology. His definition of actuality as the formation of content into a person's reality, rather than something potential becoming actualized, is more compatible with Eucharistic theology, which states that a person's reception of the Eucharist depends upon their acceptance of Christ. In Zubirian terms, the Eucharist is only the body of Christ if the receiver has received Christ into their life. Thus, the Eucharist takes on a much more personal role, as its consecration is not complete without the individual's acceptance of Jesus into their lives. Zubiri's emphasis on possibility as the determinant of being means things like freedom of speech and expression should be emphasized. Possibility's role as the cornerstone of reason whilst always being incomplete is a perfect demonstration of God's allowance of imperfection to lead to goodness, as we

choose to love or reject God. Finally, Zubiri's philosophy greatly contributes to what theologians call a theology of the gift. Reality gives itself to us without the expectation of anything in return. No matter what we do or how we think, real content impresses itself upon us; it gives itself to us, and nothing we do can add or detract from it. Real content gives itself to us and expects nothing in return. Life, particularly human sentient intelligence, is a sheer product act of love. And just as we are given reality with no expectation of anything in return, we, too, can participate in creatively giving to others. Whether that be via a physical gift like a card to a friend or the gift of listening to someone in need, we can contribute to the formation of other people's realities, expecting nothing in return. Hence, by loving each other, we participate in the great giving process that God Himself initiated; this culminates in the creation of new life that only one man and one woman can accomplish, and that is exactly what my next series will be about.

#### **About the author**

Will Deatherage graduated from The Catholic University of America with his B.A. in Politics and Theology in 2020 and his M.A. in Historical-Systematic Theology in 2022. He is also the Founder and CEO of Catholics for Hire LLC, a digital marketing company. In his spare time, Deatherage creates videos about philosophy and theology, with a focus on epistemology and magisterial authority. He is particularly drawn to Xavier Zubiri's desire to build a realist systematic philosophy that accounts for reality's dynamism, incorporates the modern sciences, and bridges the gap between sentience and intelligence.