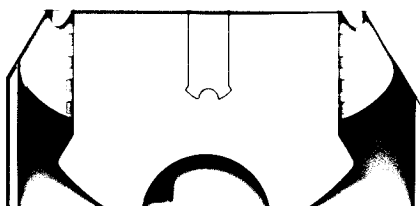


- delivered LW, BC, June
- preparing Nov. 1
- final version: handwritten re Gratia operans



Response Notes for LRI Seminar 10-10-2002

It may help to advance the discussion if I try to clarify some aspects of what I said in the second paper of mine that Bob mentions. For out of that clarification, it may become evident that whatever differences there are between us on the issues under discussion, for all practical purposes they are not all that great. Failing that, the clarification I offer may serve to identify where precisely the difference lies.

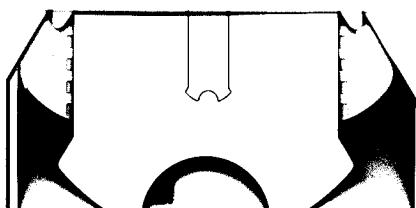
First, I want to say some things about systematic conceptions. As defined by Lonergan in *De Deo Trino II*, a systematic conception is a conception that expresses an understanding that is virtually sufficient for the resolution of all the questions of some tract.

The troublesome word here is 'virtually.' 'Virtually' contrasts with 'formally.' Lonergan's definition does not say that a systematic conception is a conception that expresses an understanding that is formally sufficient for the resolution of all the of the questions of some tract. But he is saying something; and it may serve our purpose to try to pin down more clearly what he is saying.

I have a suggestion for a way to approach this. 'Virtual,' I would suggest, refers essentially to the instrumental order. In *Grace and Freedom* (p.83), we find this definition:

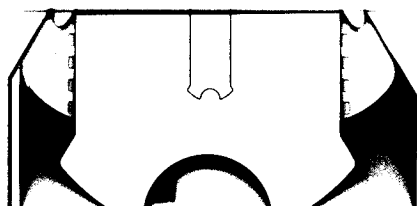
An instrument is a lower cause moved by a higher so as to produce an effect within the category proportionate to the higher.

An example may clarify this. The actions of the tools that Michelangelo used in sculpting the Pietà were virtually sufficient for the production of that work, not because of their sufficiency in themselves for producing that work, but because of the controlling artistic ability that resided in Michelangelo.



Now, I suggest that, *mutatis mutandis*, Lonergan's definition of an instrument has an application to the notion of a systematic conception and indeed provides a way of clarifying what is meant by 'virtually.' The relevant effects are the resolutions of all the questions of some tract. Relative to that is the controlling intelligible content of the systematic conception. It is the controlling intelligible content because it is that intelligible content that is INVOKED and EMPLOYED by the theologian's art in every solution of the range of questions that arise in the tract, and so it is the intelligible content that is IMPLICATED in every solution. Just as the marble of the Pietà was there to be shaped and formed, just as there were many movements of the tools, all under the control of Michelangelo's art, so there are the data that give rise to the range of questions of some tract, and there are the many acts of understanding that continually provide answers to those questions. But all of these acts of understanding INVOKE and EMPLOY the theologian's *habitus* that is here constituted by the core Acts of Understanding that find expression in the systematic conception of the tract. The core Acts of Understanding are IMPLICATED in the many acts of understanding that proffer solutions to the questions. Without that systematic conception, the various answers falter into a mere aggregate, each member of which is at best minimally successful in answering the question or questions that have evoked it.

If the core Acts of understanding that find expression in the systematic conception of the tract were themselves sufficient to answer the range of questions that arise in the tract, having no need of the other acts understanding, then the systematic conception could properly be described as FORMALLY sufficient. The theologian's art would consist merely in the repeated application of the systematic conception, much as one does with an algorithm. As it is, the systematic conception is not sufficient in itself to answer all of the questions of the tract, even though it is



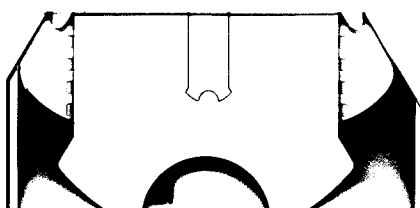
the controlling intelligibility of the tract, that is, even though it is INVOKED, EMPLOYED and IMPLICATED in every adequate answer, even though all the other acts of understanding and conceptions necessary to attain answers are themselves unified only through the systematic conception.

As best as I can ascertain, this set of circumstances is what Lonergan is referring to when he says that a systematic conception is a conception that expresses an understanding that is VIRTUALLY sufficient for the resolution of all the questions of some tract.

As Bob has indicated in his paper, I have mused about the possibility of there being a SYSTEMATIC CONCEPTION of SYSTEMATIC CONCEPTIONS. Given what I have just said, we could assign some features to it.

First, without a systematic conception of systematic conceptions, all other systematic conceptions would together constitute a mere aggregate, there being no enunciated unifying principle. Alternatively, with a systematic conception of systematic conceptions, there would be an acknowledged controlling intelligibility with respect to the systematic conceptions of the tracts. And in a properly functioning systematics, the systematic conception of systematic conceptions would in some way be INVOKED, EMPLOYED and IMPLICATED as each of the systematic conceptions of the tracts performed its proper task.

Second, each systematic conception of a tract is virtually sufficient for the resolution of all of all the questions that arise within its domain. If such systematic conceptions together have an extension that coincides with the functional specialty Systematics, then it would seem to follow that if there is a systematic conception of systematic conceptions, it would be the

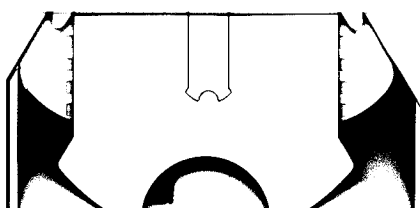


conception that expresses an understanding that is virtually, though not formally, sufficient for the resolution of all of the questions in the functional specialty, Systematics.

As Bob has indicated, I have inclined to the view the what has come to be known as Lonergan's four-point hypothesis is just such a systematic conception, and for want of a better name, I have dubbed it the unified field structure for the functional specialty, Systematics. Bob is disinclined to accept the claim that the four-point hypothesis is adequate as a unified field structure for Systematics, arguing instead that together with the four-point hypothesis there must also be included in the unified field structure what Lonergan calls basic and total science, that is, cognitional theory, epistemology, metaphysics and existential ethics, especially as these issue in a theory of history with its key notion of the scale of values.

Given the precise issue I was trying to address in my paper, I am reluctant to go along with this.

Let me first give some reasons for my reluctance. Were I to rewrite my paper, I would speak of the four created terms of the divine missions that participate in the divine relations, namely, the secondary act of existence of the Incarnation, sanctifying grace, the *habitus* of charity and the light of glory as IMMEDIATE consequent conditions. No created supernatural reality can claim priority or mediation with respect to them. They are the unified supernatural core network, created participations in the divine relations, out of which flows the prolongations of the divine missions, that is, all else in God's solution to the human problem of evil. Indeed, as Fred Crowe remarks in *The Doctrine of the Most Holy Trinity* the supernatural network composed of the four great graces are in a "class apart." For they never occur in the state called *informis*. "They are permanent on principle, charity passing without essential change into heaven,

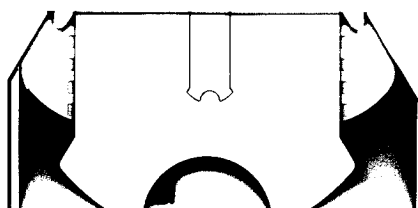


and the others similarly remaining forever..." (pp. 169-170). In fact, to suppose otherwise is tantamount to supposing that creation could be recalcitrant to God's bidding, that creation could somehow circumvent the divine will to send the Son and the Spirit.

It was considerations such as these that led me to remark in the second paper that "it seems safe to affirm that the entire economy of salvation is grounded and encompassed within the mission of the Son from the Father and mission of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son, and that everything that pertains to the economy of salvation, apart from the divine missions in their constitution and immediate consequent formal terms, in one way or another refers back to the missions and to the consequent formal terms that, precisely as consequent formal terms of the missions, are never to be found uninformed." Here, I would add that I think we can safely affirm something further. When I was thinking about what to say in this response, I kept thinking of the answer I learned as a child from the Catechism: Why did God make us? To know love and serve him here on earth and to be with him forever in Heaven. In *The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, Lonergan remarks:

If the triune God understands and wills that only the Son should become incarnate and this in such a way that the union should take place in the person and on the basis of the person, then by this understanding and willing (1) everything finite required for the incarnation is produced since God acts through his intellect...(p. 133).

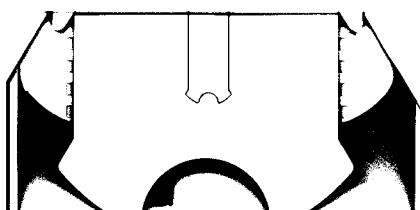
Not only is the entire economy of salvation grounded and encompassed within the mission of the Son from the Father and mission of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son, not only is everything that pertains to the economy of salvation, apart from the divine missions in their constitution and immediate consequent formal terms, in one way or another referred back to the



missions and to the consequent formal terms, so too is the entirety of creation, all of world order with its metaphysical elements of potency form and act and with vertical finality and what results from it, all of human history, its structure, its concrete unfolding and its end. All of this, in one way or another, is CONFIGURED to the mission of the Son and the mission of Holy Spirit. For, as the line from Lonergan that I am overly fond of says, there are no divine afterthoughts. And, I would add, there are no ineffectual divine solutions.

What conclusion do I draw from all of this? I would be inclined to answer that if the relations between the realities I have been speaking of are such as I have been suggesting, then the relation of virtual, though certainly not formal, sufficiency obtains between the four-point hypothesis or supernatural network, on the one hand, and the supernatural prolongations of the divine missions, that is, everything that pertains to the economy of salvation apart from the divine missions in their constitution and immediate consequent formal terms, and the configuring of the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit in creation, in world order with its metaphysical elements of potency form and act and with vertical finality and what results from it, and in human history, in its structure, its concrete unfolding, and its end, on the other hand.

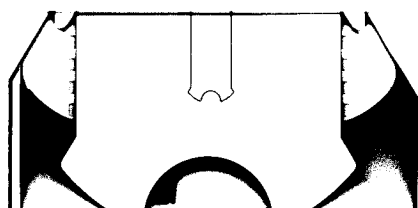
Now if we include total and basic science and a theory of history as elements within what I have been calling a unified field structure for the functional specialty, Systematics, and if we allow that the unified field structure is the systematic conception of systematic conception, and so is virtually sufficient for the resolution of all questions in the functional specialty Systematics, then the relation of virtual sufficiency cannot obtain between the four-point hypothesis, on the one hand, and total and basic science and a theory of history, on the other. The four-point hypothesis cannot then be INVOKED, EMPLOYED and IMPLICATED in an explanation of the



why of total and basic science and the structure of history. No account of their being configured to the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit can then be given. For to do so is immediately to place total and basic science and the theory of history outside the unified field structure. In other words, in the functional specialty, Systematics, operating according to the way of Synthesis, total and basic science and a theory of history are theologically subsequent to the mission of the Son and the mission of the Spirit and as such are not to be included in the unified field structure for the functional specialty Systematics.

I said at the beginning that whatever differences there are between Bob and myself on the issues under discussion, for all practical purposes they are not all that great. I want to end by suggesting why I think this is so.

My suspicion is that we each have been concerned with different issues. My suspicion, conveniently subject to immediate correction if needed, is that Bob has been concerned to identify and characterize all the key elements that must be in place in order for there to be any possibility of at least beginning to develop a Lonergan inspired Systematics. My concern has been more pedestrian. I have not been concerned to identify and characterize all such elements, only the theologically fundamental or core elements, and to argue why just these are the theologically fundamental or core elements. For all their virtual sufficiency, these elements are insufficient by themselves for developing a Systematics. If 'unified field structure' is taken in a broader sense than that intended in paper of mine that Bob mentions, that is, if it is taken as including all the key elements that must be in place in order for there to be any possibility of at least beginning to develop a Lonergan inspired Systematics, then provided that one specifies why precisely that structure is unified, and provided that one acknowledges that some elements of the



structure are theological subsequent to others, I do not see there is any great problem in accepting Bob's proposal as a working hypothesis as one attempt to develop a Systematics along the lines Lonergan has suggested.

