

## **Elements of a Methodical Understanding of Eastern Christian Mysticism**

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In his 1989 article, ‘Psychic Conversion and Lonergan’s Hermeneutics,’ Robert M. Doran expressed a key element of the hermeneutics of Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984) as follows:

Discourse that unfolds on, and that is meant to be responded to on, the psychological levels of expression as contrasted with scientific and philosophical levels, is, then, the expression of sensitivity’s consolidation of and adaptation to the differentiations of the polymorphic set of transcendental notions that the consciousness of its author has reached.<sup>1</sup>

In other words, such expression is a symbolic formulation of the author’s recognition of the differentiations of consciousness that have been explanatorily understood in and through the work of scholars within the horizon cleared by Lonergan.<sup>2</sup>

In their efforts to achieve adequate depth, symbolic differentiations can become illustrative of deficiencies in existing explanatory differentiations and can lead to further

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<sup>1</sup> Robert M. Doran, ‘Psychic Conversion and Lonergan’s Hermeneutics,’ in *Lonergan’s Hermeneutics: Its Development and Application*, ed. Sean E. McEvenue and Ben F. Meyer (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1989) 161-220, at 170.

<sup>2</sup> This is not to say that others, who have not been explicitly influenced by Lonergan’s work, have not covered these same points or made contributions to the explanatory clarification of human subjectivity. Such work by anyone would fall within the horizon worked out by Lonergan, even if only de facto.

explanatory developments. A good example of such symbolic feedback is the material of the Christian mystical tradition, the texts of which are typically symbolic and arise out of individuals and groups whose familiarity with the human spirit is often rightly regarded as the pinnacle of Christian spiritual development. Systematic theologians should take as theologically serious, with appropriate qualification, the literature of the ascetic traditions of the Christian east and oppose any notion that such writings are merely symbolic or affective niceties without systematic-theological import.

One important set of such documents in Eastern Christian spirituality is known as the *Macarian Homilies*. Composed in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century by an unknown but likely Syrian ascetic writer, they are as formative for the spirituality of the Christian East as are the writings of Origen, Evagrius of Pontus, and Dionysius Areopagites.<sup>3</sup> One of the most important aspects of the *Homilies* is their depiction of the visionary experience of Christian mystics. The emphasis of these accounts is twofold: a linking of revelation and luminosity on the one hand, and a notion of graced intoxication on the other. A full account of these emphases is not possible here, but briefly, it can be said that for the writer of the *Homilies*, divine luminosity is the divine ‘shining forth,’ the revealing of God’s self, and the encounter with God’s glorious luminosity makes one likewise luminous and likewise revelatory of God’s self. In addition, the encounter with the divine luminosity produces a divine intoxication in the visionary, indicating an affective element accompanying the theophanic state.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See the Introduction to George A. Maloney SJ, *Pseudo-Macarius: The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter* (New York: Paulist, 1992).

<sup>4</sup> For fuller accounts of these two emphases, see Stuart Burns, ‘Divine Ecstasy in Gregory of Nyssa and Pseudo-Macarius: Flight and Intoxication,’ *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*

The goal in this article is merely to lay out an explanatory differentiation corresponding to the differentiation expressed by the Macarian homilist in symbolic form. I will develop my explanatory account of these elements of interiority by positing a theory of the divinely-enraptured individual as analogically revelatory. First, I will examine the material of two recent articles, one dealing with revelation and the other dealing with elevation. Second, I will articulate the role that the addition of affective elements might play in supplementing and deepening the accounts in these two articles. Third, the work of Doran on the penetration of grace to the level of the affective will provide a clarification of the role of this affective element. Fourth, I will synthesize this material by proposing a theory of the mystical, holy individual as revelatory. Finally, I will briefly relate this theory back to the streams of emphasis in the *Homilies* to situate the thesis in the context of a hermeneutical effort oriented toward the Christian East and its traditions.

### **Preliminaries: Revelation and Elevation**

Charles Hefling's article, 'Revelation and/as Insight,'<sup>5</sup> proposes a model of revelation in 44, no. 1 (1999): 309-327; Alexander Golitzin, 'A Testimony to Christianity as Transfiguration: the *Macarian Homilies* and Orthodox Spirituality,' in *Orthodox and Wesleyan Spirituality*, ed. S. T. Kimbrough (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 2002); Andrei Orlov, 'Vested with Adam's Glory: Moses as the Luminous Counterpart of Adam in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the *Macarian Homilies*,' *Xristianskij Vostok* 4, no. 10 (2002): 740-755; Andrei Orlov and Alexander Golitzin, "'Many Lamps are Lightened from the One': Paradigms of the Transformational Vision in *Macarian Homilies*,' *Vigiliae Christianae* 55 (2001): 281-298.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Hefling, 'Revelation and/as Insight,' in *The Importance of Insight*, ed. D. Liptay and J. Liptay (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2006).

the mind of Christ (who is paradigmatic for the visionary experience in the *Homilies*) while Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer's article, 'Sanctifying Grace in a "Methodical Theology,"'<sup>6</sup> puts forth an explanatory account of sanctifying grace in a language of interiority that emphasizes the elevation of the graced person to a higher level of being.

### ***Hefling and Revelation in Christ***

Hefling's fundamental position is that 'revelation is what happens in the mind of Christ.'<sup>7</sup> This revelatory experience in the mind of Christ is the possibility of Christ's revealing God to the world, because

in this life, since we cannot grasp their intelligibility, we must make do with an imperfect understanding of mysteries, and accept them on trust. By the logic of belief, however, such trust presupposes that *someone* has truly known what we can only believe. That Christ did know it – that he knew by immediate 'vision' both God and the mysteries hidden in God – is the key to understanding the Incarnation as definitive 'site' of revelation.<sup>8</sup>

For Hefling, the knowledge Christ had in this immediate 'vision' was not divine knowledge. Working within Lonergan's Christological paradigm, which posited a transposition of the traditional two natures/one person formulation into a two subjectivities/one subject formulation,<sup>9</sup> Hefling proposes that insofar as he was human, Christ knew that which is

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<sup>6</sup> Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer, 'Sanctifying Grace in a "Methodical Theology,"' *Theological Studies* 68, no. 1 (March 2007): 52 – 76.

<sup>7</sup> Hefling, 'Revelation,' 102.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 105.

<sup>9</sup> Hefling (104) refers to Lonergan, 'The Dehellenization of Dogma,' in *A Second*

disproportionate to human knowing as such, but he knew it in finitude and in varying degrees in his human consciousness. Any beatific knowledge is a cognitive act, but it is not to be identified with consciousness, for ‘cognitive acts make objects present; consciousness makes its subject present.’<sup>10</sup> Therefore, argues Hefling, rather than being an affective exhilaration, Christ’s human knowing is a mindful happiness – ‘*eureka*, nor euphoria, is the theme.’<sup>11</sup> But that which is known in this *eureka* is neither mediated by anything – including phantasm – nor is it capable of being so mediated.

I think that this position is well served by the addition of elements of Lonergan’s thought that involve the affective, as well. In Hefling’s understanding, for example, if Christ understood what it was to be the incarnate Son of God, then he could judge that his experience coincided with his knowledge and thus that He was the Son of God.<sup>12</sup> But Christ not only knew, he loved, and while Hefling points out that wonder, our intention of being, is analogical to the occurrence of revelation in Christ insofar as our inexpressible intending parallels Christ’s inexpressible ‘vision,’ this remains in the realm of the intentional; it does not take into account the affect

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*Collection: Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan, SJ*, ed. William F.J. Ryan and Bernard J. Tyrrell (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1996), 25, and *The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 7 (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2002), part 6.

<sup>10</sup> Hefling, ‘Revelation,’ 106. Also see Bernard J. F. Lonergan, ‘Christology Today: Methodological Reflections,’ in *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan, SJ*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (New York: Paulist, 1985) 74–99.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

accompanying Christ's intentional consciousness nor, perhaps more importantly, does it in itself account for the love Christ expressed. Thus, when Hefling affirms that 'wonder, the light of intellect, the intention of being. . . are not sensations or information or insight or image or judgment,'<sup>13</sup> it is possible to agree while still asking whether this is the whole picture. It is true that wonder itself is not reducible to a sensation, but affect accompanies wonder in all its various manifestations, and so it seems that an account of affect would more fully open Hefling's otherwise thorough account to love.<sup>14</sup>

### ***Vandegeer and the Elevation of Central Form***

Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer works out the transposition of the scholastic notion of sanctifying grace to the 'unrestricted state of being in love' that Lonergan suggested corresponded to it.<sup>15</sup> His study pursues the question, 'does the essence of the soul – what Lonergan names "central form" – have a corresponding element in interiorly differentiated consciousness?'<sup>16</sup> He notes that 'in a critical metaphysics, Lonergan named the intrinsically intelligible component of the comprehensive unity in the whole, central form; and he pointed out that "the difference between our central form and Aristotle's substantial form is merely nominal."<sup>17</sup> Jacobs-Vandegeer then posits the unity of consciousness as the element in interiorly

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 110.

<sup>14</sup> Though not only a feeling, love is intimately connected with feeling. See Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1996), 31-2.

<sup>15</sup> Lonergan, *Method*, 107.

<sup>16</sup> Jacobs-Vandegeer, 'Sanctifying Grace,' 21.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 22. Quoting Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 3, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto:

differentiated consciousness that corresponds to central form: ‘although consciousness does not occur apart from an accidental or conjugate act, the unity of consciousness *reveals* the concrete intelligible form of the whole person. The essence of the soul *manifests* itself interiorly as the unified field of consciousness, the principle of unity in the dynamic performative diversity of existential subjectivity.’<sup>18</sup> Jacobs-Vandegeer suggests that the dynamic state of being in love with God refers to the supernatural enrichment of the unity of consciousness,<sup>19</sup> but he also affirms that ‘being in love unrestrictedly does not signify an *experience* either equivalent to or even independent of some accidental or conjugate act.’<sup>20</sup> Rather, ‘a coherent explanation of sanctifying grace in a methodical theology that builds on the theorem of natural proportion will not identify the “dynamic state” itself with a particular level [including that of “experience”] in any sense of the word.’<sup>21</sup>

To avoid such an identification, it must be remembered that a transposition from metaphysical to methodical categories involves the movement from substance (metaphysics) to subject (interiority). Metaphysically, a substance remains throughout accidental changes, though in the case of human beings, there are changes in the person.<sup>22</sup> This means that a transposed

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University of Toronto, 1992), 462.

<sup>18</sup> Jacobs-Vandegeer, ‘Sanctifying Grace,’ 23, emphasis his.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 27.

<sup>22</sup> Jacobs-Vandegeer relates this point as follows: ‘throughout the development of one’s life, one has grown, changed, become someone perhaps entirely different from the person one once was. The same person continues to change and, quite truly, the change marks a change in

notion of sanctifying grace can identify it with none of the accidents that change over time; elevated central form must be identified with an elevation of the underlying unity – the ‘I’ – that remains throughout operational or personal change.

### **The Passionate Element**

I am suggesting that the positions of Hefling and Jacobs-Vandegeer would benefit from the addition of an affective element. This can be done by building on Lonergan's notion of the ‘passionateness of being,’ with a particular emphasis on its growth in the work of Robert M. Doran.

### ***Intentional Consciousness and Affect***

In Lonergan's article, ‘Natural Right and Historical Mindedness,’ the levels of intentional consciousness were seen, not in isolation, but as ‘aspects of a deeper and more comprehensive principle, a tidal movement that begins before consciousness, unfolds through sensitivity, intelligence, rational reflection, responsible deliberation, only to find its rest beyond all of these in “being in love.”’<sup>23</sup> This ‘tidal movement’ was further identified as ‘the passionateness of being’ in another of his articles, ‘Mission and the Spirit’:

[the] passionateness [of being] has a dimension of its own: it underpins and accompanies and reaches beyond the subject as experientially, intelligently, rationally, morally conscious.

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the person, without, however, marking a change in the person’s substance’ (‘Sanctifying Grace,’ 24).

<sup>23</sup> Bernard J.F. Lonergan, ‘Natural Right and Historical Mindedness,’ in *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan, SJ*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (New York: Paulist, 1985), 175.



Its underpinning is the quasi-operator that presides over the transition from the neural to the psychic. . . . In the self-actualizing subject it shapes the images that release insight; it recalls evidence that is being overlooked; it may embarrass wakefulness, as it disturbs sleep, with the spectre, the shock, the shame of misdeeds. . . . As it underpins, so too it accompanies the subject's conscious and intentional operations. There is it is the mass and momentum of our lives, the color and tone and power of feeling, that fleshes out and gives substance to what otherwise would be no more than a Shakespearian 'pale cast of thought.'

As it underpins and accompanies, so too it overarches conscious intentionality. There it is the topmost quasi-operator that by intersubjectivity prepares, by solidarity entices, by falling in love establishes us as members of community.<sup>24</sup>

The passionateness of being, though not as such identifiable with the felt states corresponding to each of our operations, is still the underlying tidal movement that accompanies our 'I' as it remains throughout those operations. Likewise, for Jacobs-Vandegeer, our central form is not our operations, but it is the 'unified field of consciousness' which, through our operations of attending, understanding, knowing, valuing, and loving, manifests the unity behind the diverse acts. The passionateness of being can thus be understood as a unified field of affect paralleling the unified field of consciousness identified by Jacobs-Vandegeer; just as our central form manifests through but is not identifiable with our various operations, so the passionateness of being manifests through but is not identifiable with the felt states that accompany our various operations. I would therefore add to Jacobs-Vandegeer's thesis the suggestion that the

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<sup>24</sup> Bernard J.F. Lonergan, 'Mission and the Spirit,' in *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan, SJ*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (New York: Paulist, 1985), 29-30.

passionateness of being be understood as the affective, felt quality parallel to the unity of central form.

### *Authenticity and Affect*

Authenticity in the intentional operations of consciousness is not reached without corresponding psychic, affective, intellectual, moral, and religious conversions coupled with actual performance in those operations. This, as a dynamic state, is not often achieved because, as Lonergan said, 'it is one thing to do this occasionally, by fits and starts. It is another to do it regularly, easily, spontaneously. It is, finally, only by reaching the sustained self-transcendence of the virtuous man that one becomes a good judge, not on this or that human act, but on the whole range of human goodness.'<sup>25</sup>

Doran emphasizes that such a state of spontaneous virtue, a state of sustained fidelity to the transcendental norms of human being, is accompanied by and built on an affective self-transcendence that marks the person of integrity. It accompanies the self-transcendence of our operations of knowing and deciding, is strengthened by the authentic performance of these operations, but is also in a very definite way a prerequisite if the sustained fidelity to the performance of these operations is to become our way of life.<sup>26</sup>

In a state of affective self-transcendence, one is spontaneously open to the attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, responsibility, and loving necessary to be an authentic human being. This is the result of a development that finds its fulfillment in the state of being in love

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<sup>25</sup> Lonergan, *Method*, 35.

<sup>26</sup> Robert M. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1990), 51.

with God, a state Lonergan described in terms of felt qualities: ‘. . . at the summit of the ascent from the initial infantile bundle of needs and clamors and gratifications, there are to be found the deep-set joy and solid peace, the power and the vigor, of being in love with God.’<sup>27</sup>

There is also a relation between this felt state and value. In *Method in Theology*, Lonergan had said, ‘apprehensions [of value] are given in feelings’ and such apprehension is ‘intermediate between judgments of fact and judgments of value.’<sup>28</sup> Doran has developed this further, suggesting that feeling is related to value in three ways, corresponding to the three times of election in Loyola’s *Spiritual Exercises*. He situates Loyola’s ‘second time’ as that which corresponds to Lonergan’s position in *Method*, in which feelings are apprehensions of value, and he situates the Ignatian ‘third time’ as that which corresponds to Lonergan’s position in *Insight*, in which the good is to be reached through experience, understanding, and judgment.<sup>29</sup> But in Ignatius’ ‘first time,’ there is ‘an immediate apprehension of value in feelings in which there are no further questions and one knows there are no further questions.’<sup>30</sup> Paul’s conversion and Matthew’s calling are examples given by Loyola, and Doran adds Augustine’s notion of loving God and doing what one wills as a third example. But Doran rightly asks, ‘is this condition not rare?’<sup>31</sup> Indeed it is. In fact, I would suggest that it is a limit-case, the apex, of Christian experience, understanding, and judgment,<sup>32</sup> and precisely because it is a limit-case, it is both set

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 39.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 37.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 57.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Doran has suggested in personal communication that this occurrence isn’t so rare that

apart as a rarity and illustrative of the fullness of the reality of which each lower degree of Christian progression is a more limited participation. In such a state, one reaches the limit of Christian perfection; one is so caught up in God that one is affectively oriented toward values as they are, where ‘as they are’ can be understood as analogous to ‘from God’s point of view.’

This parallels in affect what Hefling’s paper proposes in intellect. He suggests that ‘as potentially (though not actually) infinite, there is a sense in which [the light of agent intellect or the intention of being] gives us knowledge of everything about everything.’<sup>33</sup> This intention has priority over any actual knowledge and thus it is inexpressible (for any such expression would be of an actual known, not of the transcending intention). Christ’s beatific knowledge parallels this: ‘even though Christ *actually* grasped by his beatific vision the unrestricted intelligibility that we (in this life) only *intend*, we do intend it, so that there is an analogy for the occurrence of revelation inasmuch as what our inexpressible intending does in us is what inexpressible “seeing” did in Christ.’<sup>34</sup> Though Hefling does not say so, it seems clear that Christ’s knowing is an example of the limit-case of human knowing – in other words, Christ’s knowing is an analogy for how we will know in the beatific vision, when our knowing no longer is dependent on belief. It could be said that Christ knew ‘from God’s point of view.’

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no one has had such an experience. Any case in which one seemingly ‘knows’ that one ought to do X is an example of this case for him. However, in its limit, I think that this ‘first time’ can be broadened to encompass more than just one particular act, such that it extends to the whole structure of one’s valuing. It is this extended ‘first time’ that I have termed the ‘apex’ and that I consider to be the ‘limit-case.’

<sup>33</sup> Hefling, ‘Revelation,’ 110.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

Further, Hefling quotes Lonergan to the effect that ‘just as we proceed from the intention of being to the acquisition of our effable knowledge, so also Christ the man proceeded from his ineffable knowing to the formation of his effable knowledge.’<sup>35</sup> Such a move seems impossible, for as we noted, the inexpressible knowledge of the beatific vision is precisely that – inexpressible – and as such it could not be revealed, could not enter into the human world of meaning, could not be made effable. To suggest that it does is to move from philosophical speaking to theological speaking. Within that theological discourse, ‘the act or event of revelation can be thought of as a kind of “converse insight”’ in which meaning is given *to* phantasm rather than grasped *in* phantasm, and

the condition of the possibility of revelation as ‘converse insight’ would be a consciousness through which one and the same subject knows *both* the transcendent intelligibility that is to be ‘added’ to language that already carries meaning, *and* the meaningful language to which this further meaningfulness will be ‘added.’ In Christ, that condition was fulfilled.<sup>36</sup>

However, Christ’s ‘adding’ of transcendent intelligibility to the humanly meaningful world was not solely or even primarily in terms of language. Rather, ‘his earthly life *was* its expression,’<sup>37</sup> and so it is in the realm of the dramatic life of Jesus that we find the *primordial* expression of this transcendent intelligibility. But the realm of the dramatic is intimately related to affect, insofar as the human being is a dialectical unity-in-tension between the psyche and the

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid. Quoting Bernard J.F. Lonergan, *De Verbo incarnato* (Rome: Gregorian University, 1964), 338, emphasis added by Hefling.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 109.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

spirit,<sup>38</sup> and so there must have also been an affective component accompanying Christ's knowledge of the transcendent intelligibility if he were to be able to dramatically incarnate that knowledge and thereby bring it into the human world of meaning.

### **The Affective Dimension of Grace**

Such affective considerations are integral to Doran's understanding of grace in his book *What is Systematic Theology?* He begins with an account of Lonergan's notion of the divinely-originated solution to the problem of evil. Lonergan proposes, in chapter 20 of *Insight*, that the solution will take the form of created conjugate forms, grounded in the transcendent, that will inform the operations of human beings' intentional consciousness. The first of these conjugate forms is that of charity, upon which are based 'all the other conjugate forms created in grace and universally accessible and permanent in human situations.'<sup>39</sup> Grounded on charity there is a hope in God's desire to bring us to union with the Divine Self, which overcomes bias and moves us to remember that it is with God that the source of all knowledge of God lies.<sup>40</sup> Out of charity and hope grows faith, which Lonergan distinguished from belief<sup>41</sup>: faith is knowledge born of the love of God that 'places all other value in the light and shadow of transcendent value.'<sup>42</sup>

Doran wants to emphasize that these supernatural operators (the conjugate forms of charity, hope, and faith) will have an effect on *both* the spiritual or intentional *and* the psychic or

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<sup>38</sup> See chapter 2 of Doran, *Dialectics*.

<sup>39</sup> Robert M. Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2005), 119.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 120.

<sup>41</sup> On the distinction, see Lonergan, *Method*, 115-119.

<sup>42</sup> Doran, *Systematic Theology*, 120.

felt dimensions of consciousness.<sup>43</sup> His own work on psychic conversion is the explanatory account of this work of grace, insofar as he understands psychic conversion as bringing about a correspondence of the operators and processes occurring on the respective conscious levels of spirit (the levels of insight, judgment, decision) and psyche, when all those operators have acquiesced as obediential potency to the reception of a set of habits created as free gift and have allowed those habits to become operative throughout living.<sup>44</sup>

Psychic conversion, ‘the penetration of grace to the sensitive and primordially intersubjective levels of consciousness,’<sup>45</sup> effects the acquiescence necessary for spiritual, intentional operations to occur under the influence of grace. ‘There are released the requisite and appropriate images that are laden with affect oriented to God,’<sup>46</sup> establishing ‘a habitual openness that directly affects the psychic dimensions of the same consciousness.’<sup>47</sup> This penetration is experienced as a mystery that is

at once symbol of an ever inexhaustible and uncomprehended absolute intelligence and love, sign of the fragments of complete intelligibility that have been grasped, and psychic force empowering living human bodies to a collaborative, joyful, courageous, wholehearted, intelligent adoption of the dialectical attitude that meets evil with a greater

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 118.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 118-9.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 119.

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The penetration itself effects affective conversion, not psychic conversion, but psychic conversion is the opening to ‘a *sensitive* and *organic* appropriation of the other effects of grace.’<sup>49</sup> Through psychic conversion, we are *enabled* to experience a felt, affective quality that accompanies the conjugate forms themselves.

This affective quality is not simply an emotional nicety. It is in fact integral to the full and proper functioning of conscious intentionality, as indicated by Lonergan:

all exercise of human intelligence presupposes a suitable flow of sensitive and imaginative presentations. . . so charged with affects that they succeed both in guiding and in propelling action. . . [because] man’s sensitivity needs symbols that unlock its transforming dynamism and bring it into harmony with the vast but impalpable pressures of the pure desire, of hope, and of self-sacrificing charity.<sup>50</sup>

Psychic conversion sets the stage for ‘a continuity of the formal and full meanings of both doctrinal and systematic theology with the elemental carriers of meaning in which God has revealed to the world the mystery of divine love.’<sup>51</sup> Doran emphasizes that such continuity is of great import: God’s revelation ‘is in the elemental symbolic communication of dramatic and

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 120, emphasizes his.

<sup>50</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 744-5. Lonergan also noted that ‘this transformation of sensitivity and intersubjectivity penetrates to the physiological level *though the clear instances appear only in the intensity of mystical experience*’ (ibid, 763, emphasis added). Such a ‘clear instance’ would be the limit-case or at least a near approach to it.

<sup>51</sup> Doran, *Systematic Theology*, 122.



aesthetic disclosure' and a theology or ethics divorced from or neglectful of this dimension of revelation 'can easily be closed to the underpinning operators that God employed to reveal the eternal mystery of God's kenotic self-transcendence in our regard. . . .'<sup>52</sup> In terms of Lonergan's method, a theology or ethics that gives short shrift to this psychic, affective element will fail to connect its direct discourse (the functional specialties of Foundations, Doctrines, Systematics, and Communications) to the material mediated in indirect discourse (the functional specialties of Research, Interpretation, History, and Dialectic); it will fail to connect its positions to the elemental and dramatic origin of the material *about which* it is attempting to discourse.

Even with the inclusion of such dramatic-aesthetic elements, however, the question remains concerning the reception of God's Word in the intentional consciousness of the believer. The key here is Lonergan's distinction between a movement 'from below' and a movement 'from above' in consciousness.<sup>53</sup> The first is the movement from experience, to understanding, to judgment, and finally to decision; it is the process whereby knowledge is immanently generated in the subject, and it results in what Lonergan terms 'original meaning.' The movement from above is that of a 'healing vector'; it is a movement from an initial attitude of trust or faith, 'down' through valuing, believing, understanding built on belief, and renewed attentiveness. This is the realm of 'ordinary meaning,' meaning received from the community.

Doran notes that 'the acknowledgement of [the] movement of reception "from above"

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Bernard J.F. Lonergan, 'Questionnaire on Philosophy: A Response,' in *Philosophical and Theological Papers: 1965-1980*, ed. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2004), 361.

enables us to broaden or expand our account of what Lonergan calls empirical consciousness<sup>54</sup> and thus to expand our notion of the experience of receiving God's Word. The spontaneous and immediate data of sense and consciousness are not the only (and possibly, Doran notes, not even the primary) data that occur to the human subject.<sup>55</sup> The data of conscious intentionality are often *already* invested with meaning, and in fact, the healing vector operative in consciousness brings to *all* the levels of intentional consciousness an empirical element, such that each of the levels operates now 'as a form of mediated immediacy that receives empirically the intelligibility, truth, and value of communally sedimented meaning.'<sup>56</sup> Doran emphasizes that 'there is an immediacy about [this] reception that qualifies it as "empirical consciousness,"' but when such reception is of 'communally sedimented meaning,' such empirical consciousness is not simply empirical, but 'is also intelligent, judgmental, evaluative.'<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Doran, *Systematic Theology*, 125.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 125-6. Patrick Byrne, in his article 'Consciousness: Levels, Sublations, and the Subject as Subject,' *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 13, no. 2 (1995): 131-50, supplies a useful clarification on a similar point. He suggests that the levels of consciousness in Lonergan be understood not so much as levels within a single overarching presence-to-self, such that the subject is moving 'up and down' within a constant self-presence and is now at an empirical level, now at an intelligent level, etc., but rather that the levels be understood in terms of the subject's *changing* presence-to-self or consciousness, such that one is attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible *within* an attentive self-presence, and attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible *within* an intelligent self-presence, etc. This would provide a good framework for

This is precisely the reason for Lonergan's suggestion of the idea that the community has priority over the individual subject.<sup>58</sup> 'It is the community that sets the stage for the subject's dramatic pattern of experience,'<sup>59</sup> and it is in the dramatic pattern of experience that revelation occurs. The levels of consciousness that Lonergan distinguished from empirical consciousness then have something of the empirical about them, as they receive meanings and values from the community and its tradition and heritage.<sup>60</sup>

Here, Lonergan's notion of elemental meaning becomes very important. He understands elemental meaning as 'the conscious performing of a transformed subject in his transformed world'; in it 'the subject is transformed' and has 'become just himself: emergent, ecstatic, originating freedom.'<sup>61</sup> Though one can understand such meaning within a conceptual field, 'this procedure reflects without reproducing the elemental meaning' because 'the proper expression of the elemental meaning is the work of art itself'<sup>62</sup>:

what characterizes elemental meaning is that the distinction of subject and object has not yet arisen. Not only is it the case that the sense in act is the sensible in act, but also it is the case that the intellect in act, and very much in act in the 'Eureka!' of immanently generated insight, is the intelligible in act. 'Knowledge by identity' means there is a

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understanding how empirical consciousness 'is also intelligent, judgmental, evaluative.' See, in particular, pages 136-139.

<sup>58</sup> See Doran, *Systematic Theology*, 126.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 129.

<sup>61</sup> Lonergan, *Method*, 63.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

preconceptual unity of knower and known, whether in sensation or in the act of insight.<sup>63</sup> This ‘knowledge by identity’ holds true in symbolic communication, as well; the data received in a work of art or a symbol are ‘already invested with a meaning’ in a manner like that of the other carriers of meaning.<sup>64</sup>

Such received meanings have both an effective and a constitutive function.<sup>65</sup> Received meanings, as received, are only potentially intelligible insofar as they are data that have not risen to the level of insight, yet they still perform effective and constitutive functions. Insofar as merely potential intelligibility is incapable of performing these functions, it seems that such received meanings cannot possibly be functioning effectively and constitutively. As a solution, Doran makes use of a distinction between formal and actual intelligibility<sup>66</sup>: formal intelligibility is latent in the received data and is grounded in the experiences, understandings, judgments, and decisions of the others who originated those meanings; actual intelligibility is reached in the *origination* of those meanings and values, and it then becomes the formal intelligibility of meanings and values as they are received by others by whom they were not immanently generated.

Both formal and actual intelligibilities have experienced, understood, and judged components. The immediacy of the reception of meaning provides the empirical component, the formal intelligibility provides the intelligible component, and ‘[1]the “always with us” quality of

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<sup>63</sup> Doran, *Systematic Theology*, 129.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> On the functions of meaning (cognitive, constitutive, effective, and communicative), see Lonergan, *Method*, 76-81.

<sup>66</sup> Doran, *Systematic Theology*, 130.

previous judgments, [2]belief, or [3]a suspicious suspension of belief<sup>67</sup> will provide the judgmental component. Such a structural isomorphism means, for Doran, that there is a point at which ordinary meaningfulness and original meaningfulness coincide.<sup>68</sup> Elemental meaning

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 131. Doran notes that here, ‘belief’ pertains, especially in the third of these, to ‘more of “state of mind” than of cognitive apprehension.’ In light of our project, it is worth asking – is ‘state of mind’ not, at least partially, affective?

<sup>68</sup> Doran quotes *Method*, with his own interpolations: ‘[T]he ordinary meaningfulness of ordinary language is essentially public and only derivatively private. For language is ordinary if it is in common use. It is in common use, not because some isolated individual happens to have decided what it is to mean, but because all the individuals of the relevant group understand what it means. Similarly, it is by performing expressed mental acts that children and foreigners come to learn a language. But they learn the language by learning how it is ordinarily used, so that their private knowledge of ordinary usage is derived from the common usage that essentially is public. [We may say the same, *mutatis mutandis*, of the ordinary meaningfulness of most other carriers of meaning, though some, like the smile, are “natural and spontaneous.”] . . . What is true of the ordinary meaningfulness of ordinary language is not true of the original meaningfulness of any language, ordinary, literary, or technical. [By extension, we may say that it is also not true of the original meaningfulness of other carriers of meaning.] For all language develops and, at any time, any language [or any other set of public carriers of meaning] consists in the sedimentation of the developments that have occurred and have not become obsolete. Now developments consist in discovering new uses for existing words [or other carriers of meaning], in inventing new words, and in diffusing the discoveries and inventions. All three are a matter of expressed mental acts. The discovery of a new usage is a mental act expressed by the new usage.

resides at the point of coincidence between ordinary and original meaningfulness, because it is prior to the conceptual distinction between knower and known, which grounds the distinctions between formal and actual, ordinary and original.

Doran applies this point to revelation, insisting that ‘the very reception of data that are also invested with meaning is itself *constitutive of the subject’s horizon*. And it is precisely at this level, I think, that God’s entrance into the world of human meaning takes place.’<sup>69</sup> By situating revelation at this level, Doran can affirm that such an entrance ‘is God’s effecting transformations in that already given intelligibility of “world” that is correlative to our horizons – effecting transformations through the cognitive, constitutive, communicative, and effective functions of God’s own meaning, of God’s original meaningfulness, and ultimately of God’s incarnate meaning. . . .’<sup>70</sup> In terms of Lonergan’s notion of the intrinsic intelligibility of historical and evolutionary process, which he termed emergent probability,<sup>71</sup> ‘revelation as God’s entrance into the human world of meaning shifts the probabilities in favour of graced ordinary meaningfulness. And that shift in probabilities affects the reception, or better, the receptive potential, of subjects in community to the divine meaning intended when God enters our world of meaning.’<sup>72</sup> Extending all of the above into a Trinitarian context, it is clear that the community of the Trinitarian persons ultimately ‘sets the stage for the subject’s dramatic pattern of

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The invention of a new word is a mental act expressed by a new word’ (Lonergan, *Method*, 255-6).

<sup>69</sup> Doran, *Systematic Theology*, 137, emphasis mine.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> See Lonergan, *Insight*, chapter 4.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 139.

experience?:

the entitative change that is the grace that makes us not only pleasing to God, *gratia gratum faciens*, but somehow imitative of the divine goodness. . . . sets up a state of grace, where a state of grace is a social situation, an intersubjective set of relationships, where the founding subjects, as it were, are the three divine subjects, and where grace prevails because they have come to dwell in us and with us.<sup>73</sup>

I suggest that these reflections on elemental meaning provide a perhaps more critical way of restating Doran's suggestion that there is a 'primordial enrapturing of the theological subject by the object of the unrestricted love to which one is awakened by that object itself.'<sup>74</sup> It is a way of speaking of 'the self-revelation of the world-transcendent God in a manifestation that is perceived by a light infused within the subject in the very revelation itself' such that one reaches a better, fuller understanding of the truth that 'is a word that proceeds from that prior engagement, that cannot be understood except within the horizon enlightened by that vision, and that articulates what can be not only experienced but also understood, affirmed, and submitted to only within that horizon.'<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Robert M. Doran, 'Ignatian Themes in the Thought of Bernard Lonergan,' *Toronto Journal of Theology* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2006), par. 21, emphasis mine.

<sup>74</sup> Doran, *Dialectics*, 164.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 164-65. This is because 'manifestation, unveiling, *alêtheia*, mystery, elemental meaning – these ground, precede, awaken, the cognitive process that leads to proclamation, judgment, word, objectified formal and full meaning. . . . So the profoundest depths of being do in fact proportion the cognitive subject to the objective of the desire to know, to being, in a more primordial fashion even than that exhibited in the reception of the word of tradition.'

The aesthetic enrapturing of the subject is in fact the beginning of that healing movement that proceeds from God's love, through values, to intellectual possibility. Insofar as a full grasp of the beautiful, real, true, good, and loving is ultimately dependent on this enrapturing, and therefore full realization of these transcendentals is related to full affective transcendence,<sup>76</sup> the enrapturing is the condition of the possibility of the full realization of authentic human being, and the enrapturing is itself a reception of Trinitarian communal meaning that is radically 'constitutive of the subject's horizon' such that the received meaning is itself meaningful only in the case of such reception.

Jacobs-Vandegeer holds that such a change is an elevation of central form, but if we affirm a change in central form while also affirming that the passionateness of being is the felt experience parallel to central form, then consequently, with a change in central form, there must also be an alteration of the affective thrust that begins prior to intentional consciousness and proceeds through the levels of consciousness up to its ultimate fulfillment in the state of unrestricted being in love. Further, if the fulfillment of the thrust of the passionateness of being is required for complete authenticity, and if that thrust is both present and different in each of the operations of pre-intentional and intentional consciousness, then the fulfillment of the thrust must be achieved not monolithically, but rather in terms of each of those different felt states. The passionate tidal movement is experienced differently as one is attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible, and loving, and so although the ultimate consummation of that tidal movement is in loving, still because such loving changes one's responsible, reasonable, intelligent, and attentive

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<sup>76</sup> 'Affective self-transcendence must characterize one's habitual state if one's intentional self-transcendence is to be regular, easy, spontaneous, sustained, a way of life' (Doran, *Dialectics*, 51).



behavior, the fulfillment must correspond to our orientations to unrestricted beauty, reality, truth, goodness, and love. Only a union of the thrust with unrestricted beauty, reality, truth, goodness, and love would ultimately fulfill the desires of that thrust and be a full affective self-transcendence, thus sustaining fully converted actual performance of self-transcending intentionality.

### **Divinely-Originated Dramatic Artistry as Revelatory**

So far, the focus of this article has been on the aesthetically-enraptured, affectively converted, authentic human subject as subject. I wish now to turn our attention to the enraptured human subject *as object*: the life of the enraptured authentic subject is a work of dramatic art that can be seen by other subjects. Dramatic artistry is linked with the transcendental norms insofar as the work of dramatic art that the authentic life *is* is that of a subject who is authentically attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible, and loving. If such a life is fully beautiful (in the sense of the limit-case) it must also, as an object, be fully real, fully true, fully good, and fully loving. As such, this life is an authentic embodiment of both the fullness of the human central form and the fullness of the tidal movement accompanying that form, both of which are expressed in and through, though distinct from, the operations of experiencing, understanding, judging, deciding, and loving and that life's corresponding intelligibility, truth, goodness, and love.

This embodiment – this incarnation even, to use a more provocative term – is a fully authentic enfleshment of the transcendental imperatives Be Attentive, Be Intelligent, Be Reasonable, Be Responsible, and Be in Love,<sup>77</sup> and as a fully authentic enfleshment of the imperatives, such a life is expressive of the term toward which our central form and its tidal

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<sup>77</sup> Lonergan, *Method*, 53.

movement reach *through* the operations of which the imperatives are normative expressions. In such a limit-case of fullest authenticity, one has concretized and made available for sensitive apprehension the performance of authentic human being, and thus one has made available for sensitive apprehension a witness to the object of that authentic being. Because this object is God, for God is unrestricted beauty, reality, truth, goodness, and love, the human being who lives out the dramatically beautiful life grounded in the aesthetic enrapturing of the glory of God is not only herself beautiful, real, true, good, and loving; he or she is also the place of encounter with the *unrestrictedly* beautiful, real, true, good, and loving. Such was Christ as the limit-case, but it is also the situation, to a lesser degree and analogically, of the enraptured Christian.<sup>78</sup>

Such a life, therefore, can be said to be the occasion of God's revealing of Godself through that human being. Because the maintenance of such an authentic life in the *subject* is dependent upon God's grace and such an authentic life as *object* is the occasion of witness to God as the term of human being, God is both the Revealer and the Revealed. Authentic living is the state in which the human being becomes revelatory insofar as he or she is a vessel of God's *self-revelation*.

I would suggest that this is a transcendently-grounded way of saying what Hans Urs von Balthasar intends when he suggests that we should become 'transparent' to the glory of

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<sup>78</sup> Our revelatory capacity is not the same as the revelatory reality of the Christ, the Word incarnate. The revelatory reality of the Word incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth was in virtue of his being the second person of the Trinity, the Son of God; that is, the Christ is revelatory of the Father because he is one in being with the Father. Our revelatory capacity, however, is not in virtue of our nature. It is, rather, in virtue of our adoption as sons and daughters by the Father, in Christ, and through the Spirit.

God.<sup>79</sup> I would also suggest, however, that this notion includes more than single individuals. As we saw from Lonergan above, ‘in an aggregate of self-transcending individuals there is the significant coincidental manifold in which can emerge a new creation.’<sup>80</sup> The emergence of this new creation will occur just insofar as these individuals act under the influence of the systematizing higher order. That influence is comprised of the supernatural conjugate forms *and* their penetration to the sensitive level, and as an aggregate of self-transcending individuals reaches participation in the higher order organized by grace, then the aggregate itself takes on the properties of authenticity as an *aggregate* of human beings. In such a case, the aggregate is itself embodying group authenticity, and by extending the position on the relation between authenticity and revelation, we can say that such a society is itself revelatory. Finally, insofar as such a society takes it upon itself to order all aspects of creation, even impersonal ones, in terms of such authenticity, then all creation participates in this revelatory capacity.

## **Conclusion**

Returning to the hermeneutical enterprise suggested at the beginning of this article, I can briefly show the correspondence between the explanatory differentiations outlined here and the symbolic differentiations of the *Macarian Homilies*. The *Homilies*’ accounts of visionary experience emphasized an element of elevation and an element of affective experience. The two are linked and mutually interpenetrating: one is not glorious without the intoxication, and neither can one be intoxicated (in this sense) without encountering the glory. Under the influence of such

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<sup>79</sup> See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 1: *Seeing the Form*, ed. Joseph Fessio and John Riches, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1982), *passim*.

<sup>80</sup> Lonergan, ‘Mission and the Spirit,’ 30.

an experience, the holy person is a site of revelation, a place where that person's union with God serves to make them a conduit of God's own self.

In this study, I took up the explanatory differentiations of consciousness worked out by Hefling in terms of revelation and by Jacobs-Vandegeer in terms of elevation, both of them working within the horizon cleared by the work of Bernard Lonergan, and to them I added an affective element that also derives from the work of Lonergan and from the work of Doran in his own developments. I proposed an explanatory account of the human being as revelatory in which revelation and elevation, coupled with appropriate affective changes, make the limit-case of authentic human subjectivity into an instance of the self-revelation of God. Such an account parallels the symbolic account of the *Homilies* insofar as it involves both affective and 'elevatory' components, and their combination results in one's becoming theophanic.

Further work is required on the development of the symbolic language of the Christian East in light of the explanatory differentiations of consciousness articulated by Lonergan and other scholars in order to understand the progress of the ascetic writers' awareness of the relevant dimensions of interiority through various writings, including the *Homilies*. Still, the *Homilies* provide a snapshot, as it were, of a particular instance of such development, of a particular case of the symbolic expression of such awareness, and so this brief comparison with that text provides at least a glimpse of the possibilities that research into this particular application of Lonergan's work might yield.

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