

# Essays in Systematic Theology 20: Imitating the Divine Relations: A Theological Contribution to Mimetic Theory<sup>1</sup>

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In several recent writings I have called attention to a four-point systematic-theological hypothesis suggested by Bernard Lonergan that aligns the four divine relations with four created participations in the relations. Lonergan calls the participations modes of grounding imitations *ad extra* of divine being.<sup>2</sup> The four-point hypothesis is itself a differentiation of the medieval theorem of the supernatural.<sup>3</sup> My concern in other essays

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was published in *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 23:2 (2005) 149-86. The editors made several helpful suggestions.

<sup>2</sup> For details, see Robert M. Doran, *What Is Systematic Theology?* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005) chapter 7, 'Structure.' The hypothesis begins as follows: '... there are four real divine relations, really identical with divine being, and therefore four quite special modes of grounding an imitation *ad extra* of divine being.' This is my own translation of Lonergan's Latin text in *De Deo trino: Pars systematica* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1964) 234-35. A more literal translation may be found in Bernard Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, vol. 12 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, trans. Michael G. Shields, ed. Robert M. Doran and H. Daniel Monsour (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007). Unless otherwise indicated, translations of *De Deo trino: Pars systematica* will be those to appear in *The Triune God*.

<sup>3</sup> On the theorem of the supernatural, see Bernard Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 1 in *Collected Works of*

has been to specify the place of the hypothesis in a contemporary systematic theology. My claim has been that it could play a role in contemporary systematics analogous to that which the theorem of the supernatural played in Aquinas's *Summa theologiae*. I need not repeat those arguments here, for in the present article I am limiting my concern to the central issue of the imitations of divine being that Lonergan says are grounded in graced participations in the divine relations. I wish to speak to this issue in the context of the mimetic theory of René Girard. I will argue that the theological notion of imitating God through graced participation in the divine relations makes a contribution to mimetic theory, but also that Girard's work contributes to the diagnostic that will enable a clear discrimination of genuine from inauthentic religion, and so ultimately of genuine from inauthentic mimesis, including mimesis of the divine. More precisely, the theological contribution may help to strengthen the theoretical status of Girard's view of mimesis<sup>4</sup> by inserting it into a systematic-theological hypothesis; and conversely, this enhanced systematic status might strengthen mimetic theory's contribution to the clarification of both bias and authenticity. What I have spoken of as psychic conversion is relevant to the dimension of bias that Lonergan calls dramatic bias, and Girard, in my view, makes a profound contribution to illuminating both dramatic bias and the dynamics of psychic conversion.

My argument is thus complex. It attempts to strengthen the theoretical status of the mimetic paradigm by relating it to Lonergan's four-point systematic-theological

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Bernard Lonergan, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000) 14-20.

<sup>4</sup> For a claim that Girard's paradigm is a model or ideal type rather than a theory, see Charles C. Hefling, 'About What Might a "Girard-Lonergan Conversation" Be?,' *Lonergan Workshop* 17, ed. Fred Lawrence (Boston College, 2002) at 97-98.

hypothesis, and it attempts to release the potential of mimetic theory to clarify the constitution of both dramatic bias and psychic conversion.

## 1 The Relations and Their Imitations

The four divine relations are, of course, paternity, filiation, active spiration, and passive spiration. What, then, are the four imitations of divine being that participate in the relations?

First, the secondary act of existence of the incarnation (*esse secundarium incarnationis*) is a created participation in divine paternity. ‘Whoever has seen me has seen the Father’ (John 14.9). The proceeding Word as such does not speak but is spoken; the incarnate Word, the proceeding Word as sent, speaks, but he speaks only what he has heard from the Father. The man Jesus participates in divine paternity, in the Father’s act of uttering the divine Word, because he has his identity not in himself but in the divine Word uttered by the Father. His act of existence is that of the divine Word. But he is substantially a man, a human *being*, and what is called the secondary act of existence is an act of existence of the Word precisely as a human being. As a created participation of divine paternity, the *esse secundarium* bears a special relation to the Son.

Second, sanctifying grace or, in a transposed set of categories, the dynamic state of being in love in an unqualified and unrestricted fashion giving rise to the horizon that is born of such love,<sup>5</sup> is a created participation in the active spiration by Father and Son of

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<sup>5</sup> 2009: As has been indicated in other essays in this series, I now wish to identify this dynamic state with charity, which flows from sanctifying grace. The latter is the received love of the Father justifying oneself in pure gift. These relations are spelled out most clearly to date in ‘Sanctifying Grace, Charity, and Divine Indwelling: A Key

the Holy Spirit. ‘... in God the origin is the Father, in the New Testament named *ho Theos*, who is identified with *agapē* (1 John 4.8, 16). Such love expresses itself in its Word, its Logos, its *verbum spirans amorem*, which is a judgment of value. The judgment of value is sincere, and so it grounds the Proceeding Love that is identified with the Holy Spirit.’<sup>6</sup> The analogy in the creature is expressed by Lonergan as follows: ‘The psychological analogy ... has its starting point in that higher synthesis of intellectual, rational, and moral consciousness that is the dynamic state of being in love. Such love manifests itself in its judgments of value. And the judgments are carried out in decisions that are acts of loving ... There are then two processions that may be conceived in God; they are not unconscious processes but intellectually, rationally, morally conscious, as are judgments of value based on the evidence perceived by a lover, and the acts of loving grounded on judgments of value.’<sup>7</sup> As the person in love grasps evidence that only a lover can grasp and utters yes on that basis, he or she spirates proceeding love.

Lonergan’s sketch of a Trinitarian analogy that begins with the dynamic state of being in love does not necessarily imply a supernatural analogy, the analogy of created participations in active and passive spiration, but neither does it exclude the possibility of a supernatural analogy, and it is the latter possibility that I wish to pursue here. It is not at all clear that this was Lonergan’s intention, and in fact we may surmise that it was not. But that does not prevent us from suggesting such a possibility. Lonergan writes: ‘... we distinguished different kinds of love: the love of intimacy, of husband and wife, of

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to the *Nexus Mysteriorum Fidei*,’ a paper delivered at the 2009 Lonergan Workshop at Boston College, and to be uploaded on this site at an appropriate time.

6 Bernard Lonergan, ‘Christology Today: Methodological Reflections,’ in *A Third Collection*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985) at 93.

7 Ibid. [2009: In the paper referred to in the previous note, I contrast the analogy toward which I have been heading with Lonergan’s later analogy as stated in this quotation.]

parents and children; the love of mankind devoted to the pursuit of human welfare locally or nationally or globally; and the love that was other-worldly because it admitted no conditions or qualifications or restrictions or reservations. It is this other-worldly love, not as this or that act, not as a series of acts, but as *a dynamic state whence proceed the acts*, that constitutes in a methodical theology what in a theoretical theology is named sanctifying grace.<sup>8</sup> Any of the three kinds of love may function in an analogy that starts from the dynamic state of being in love. In the case of the first two, the analogy is from nature. In the case of the third, the analogy is from grace. In all three instances, being in love gives rise to judgments of value, and these judgments ‘spirate’ commitment. But it is the third kind of love, precisely as providing a Trinitarian analogy, that I wish to pursue in the present context.<sup>9</sup>

When the person in love grasps evidence that only a lover can grasp and utters yes on that basis, he or she spirates proceeding love. When the dynamic state of being in love that is the origin of the process is being in love with God’s own love, the process from grasp of evidence and judgment of value to proceeding love participates in the divine active spiration of the Holy Spirit by the Father and the Son and grounds an imitation of

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8 Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (latest printing, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003) 289, emphasis added. [2009: See above, note 5.]

9 I have attempted to provide a fuller analysis of this process in the case of the third kind of love, or in what I am calling the supernatural analogy, in ‘The Starting Point of Systematic Theology,’ *Theological Studies*, December 2006. The analogy is developed further in a lecture delivered at Marquette University in October 2006, ‘Being in Love with God: A Source of Analogies for Theological Understanding.’ [2009: ‘The Starting Point ...’ will be uploaded here at the proper time. ‘Being in Love ...’ has been published in *Irish Theological Quarterly* 73 (2008) 227-42, and it too will be uploaded here at the appropriate time.]

God precisely in this relation. As such, this created participation in active spiration bears a special relation to the Holy Spirit.

Third, the habit of charity that cumulatively emanates from this dynamic state through repeated acts of love is a created participation in the passive spiration that is the Holy Spirit, and as such it bears a special relation to the Father and the Son. It grounds an imitation of the divine precisely in the relation of passive spiration within the Trinity. It is a created supernatural spirated proceeding love, just as the Holy Spirit is the uncreated spirated proceeding Love in God.

And fourth, the light of glory making possible the beatific vision of the saints is a created participation in divine filiation, leading the children of adoption perfectly back to the Father. As such it bears a special relation to the Father.

Such, in very brief compass, is the four-point hypothesis, embellished a bit in the present context in order to indicate the emphases of this paper.<sup>10</sup>

## **2 Autonomous Spiritual Processions**

Theological understanding of the divine relations is grounded in an understanding of the divine processions. The relations are identical with the processions, of course, but it has been common currency at least since Aquinas that in the order of our systematic conceptions the first step is to understand how there can be processions in the utterly simple God. For Lonergan the movement from processions to relations is taken by asking what kind of reality is to be accorded to the processions, what kind of being divine generation and the divine procession of love are. The answer is given in terms of mutually opposed relations. And it is in terms of that being that the four-point hypothesis

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10 [2009: Again, the relations of sanctifying grace and charity are better articulated in ‘Sanctifying Grace, Charity, and Divine Indwelling.’]

proceeds. Participations in or imitations of divine being are, at their root, ontological determinations of human being. The *esse secundarium* of the incarnation is in the substantial order. The entitative habit called sanctifying grace, as radicated in the essence of the soul, elevates the central form of the human being.<sup>11</sup> The habit of charity that flows from that change in our being is an absolutely supernatural conjugate form.<sup>12</sup> The ontological status of the light of glory in whose splendor we will know and love even as we are known and loved is a question to which I hope to return soon.

For Lonergan, as for Aquinas, the key to reaching an obscure and analogical understanding of the divine processions lies in what Aquinas called *emanatio intelligibilis*.<sup>13</sup> The literal translation of *emanatio intelligibilis* is, of course, ‘intelligible emanation.’ One problem with this translation, though, is that the Latin word *intelligibilis*, at least in its medieval Scholastic context, meant more than the English word ‘intelligible’ usually means. The Latin word includes in its meaning ‘intellectual’ or ‘intelligent.’ That is, it bears a reference not only to the object that is understood and so intelligible in the ordinary sense of the word, and that also is affirmed and perhaps decided upon, but also to the subject who is doing the understanding, judging, and deciding, the subject who, while being intelligible, is also intelligent.

Because this is part of the connotation that Aquinas intended, the translator and editors of *The Triune God: Systematics* have chosen the translation ‘intellectual

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11 See Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer, ‘Sanctifying Grace in a Methodical Theology,’ *Theological Studies* 68 (2007) 52-76.

12 See Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, vol. 3 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) 720-22, 747.

13 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1, q. 27, a. 1: ‘... accipienda est processio ... secundum emanationem intelligibilem ...’

emanation' for most of the occasions where *emanatio intelligibilis* occurs in Lonergan's text. But I now wish to transpose that translation to the phrase 'autonomous spiritual procession.' The transposition has grounds, as we will see, in Lonergan's work, but my main reason for resorting to it is to facilitate discussion with Girard. In fact, the key to the present discussion with Girard will be the meaning of the word 'autonomous' in this context, for Girard speaks of the illusion we entertain regarding the autonomy of our desires, and I wish to suggest an alternative meaning to the word 'autonomous' that will permit us to speak of the authentic autonomous unfolding of a set of human desires that, while they may be activated by mimesis, far from being infected by mimetic contagion, are the condition for transcending it.

I begin, however, by clarifying the meaning of the word 'spiritual,' for it is essential to my argument that spiritual and psychic dimensions of consciousness be distinguished. In *Insight* Lonergan draws a distinction between

... the intelligible and the intelligent ... [I]ntelligibility is intrinsic to being [in the sense that being is the objective of the desire to know, and so whatever is intelligently grasped and reasonably affirmed is being]. There is in the universe of proportionate being a potential intelligibility that makes experience a necessary component of our knowing, a formal intelligibility that makes understanding a necessary component, and an actual intelligibility that makes judgment a necessary component. But we too are. Besides the potential intelligibility of empirical objects, there is the potential intelligence of the disinterested, detached, unrestricted desire to know. Besides the formal intelligibility of the unity and the laws of things, there is the formal intelligence that consists in insights and grounds conceptions. Besides the actual intelligibility of existences and occurrences, there is the actual intelligence that grasps the unconditioned and posits being as known. Finally, we not only are but also know ourselves. As known to ourselves, we are intelligible, as every other



known is. But the intelligibility that is so known is also intelligence and knowing. It has to be distinguished from the intelligibility that can be known but is not intelligent and does not attain to knowledge in the proper human sense of that term. Let us say that intelligibility that is not intelligent is material, and that intelligibility that is intelligent is spiritual. Then, inasmuch as we are material, we are constituted by otherwise coincidental manifolds of conjugate acts that unconsciously and spontaneously are reduced to system by higher conjugate forms. But inasmuch as we are spiritual, we are orientated towards the universe of being, know ourselves as parts within that universe, and guide our living by that knowledge.<sup>14</sup>

Lonergan then refines the initial distinction of intelligible and intelligent, so that it becomes a distinction of spiritual intelligibility, which also is intelligent, and material intelligibility, which is not. Thus Thomas's *emanatio intelligibilis* has to do with what in *Insight* Lonergan calls spiritual intelligibility.

Next, there is the meaning of the word 'autonomous.' The English word 'intelligible' in its present, more usual meaning is appropriate in the translation of *emanatio intelligibilis* in at least one sense, in that what proceeds proceeds *because of, in accord with, in proportion to* that from which it proceeds. This relation of 'because,' this direct accord or proportion, is known to the subject in whom the procession or emanation occurs, and so is intelligible. Thus, for example, a sound judgment is sound because it proceeds from a grasp of sufficient evidence known to be sufficient, and because of, in accord with, and in proportion to the evidence that has been grasped precisely as sufficient. There is an intelligibility in the 'because of' and 'in accord with' and 'in proportion to,' precisely as these are known in the very acts entailed, that makes the word 'intelligible' quite appropriate.

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<sup>14</sup> Lonergan, *Insight* 539.

But that relation of ‘because of,’ ‘in accord with,’ ‘in proportion to,’ as known to the acting subject, is precisely what enables us to speak of *autonomous* spiritual processions. It is important for dialogue with Girard and his students to emphasize that in the expression ‘autonomous spiritual procession,’ the word ‘autonomous’ refers precisely to the ‘because of’ and ‘in accord with’ and ‘in proportion to’ aspect of the procession *as that aspect is known by the subject to constitute the relation between the principle and what proceeds from it.*

Thus, if the key to some analogical theological understanding of the divine processions and relations lies in what Aquinas called *emanatio intelligibilis*, it lies in processions that occur in our own intelligent, rational, and deliberative or existential activity, processions that form the basis of an analogy that gives us a glimpse of what the divine processions might be; but it does not lie in all the processions that occur in this realm, for there are spiritual processions that are better called spontaneous than autonomous. These will not provide a fitting analogy for divine procession for, in Scholastic terms that remain valid today, spontaneous processions even in the realm of spirit are processions of act from potency, the emergence of form from coincidental aggregates of occurrences, whereas the autonomous processions are processions of act from act in the spiritual realm of human consciousness. A clear example of a spontaneous spiritual procession is the emergence of insight from data organized by phantasm under the dynamism of inquiry. The corresponding autonomous spiritual procession is the emergence of an objectification or conceptualization from the insight itself, which is the emergence of act from act. Since there is no movement from potency to act in God, what I am here calling spontaneous processions will not provide a fitting or suitable analogy for understanding divine processions. The processions in human consciousness that will provide such an analogy must be processions of act from act.

What is meant by a procession of act from act? Formal intelligence, Lonergan writes in the quotation cited a bit back from *Insight*, ‘consists in insights and grounds

conceptions.’ Actual intelligence ‘grasps the unconditioned and posits being as known.’<sup>15</sup> And in another place he writes that the ‘development that reaches its goal in the existential decision and in fidelity to that decision is the emergence of the autonomous subject.’<sup>16</sup> In each of these instances, ‘autonomy,’ as I am using the word, is located in the procession of act from act on the basis of a grasped relation of ‘because of,’ ‘in accord with,’ ‘in proportion to’: in intellectual consciousness (concept from insight), in rational consciousness (judgment from grasp of evidence), and in existential self-constitution (decision from an authentic judgment of value). And it is in the latter dimension of spiritual autonomy, namely, existential self-constitution through decision proceeding from grasped evidence and a judgment of value consequent on that grasp, that Lonergan finds the appropriate realm in which to locate an analogy for the trinitarian processions. It is a realm in which the evidence grasped by the person in the dynamic state of being in love is first and foremost evidence regarding one’s own existential self-constitution. The consequent judgment of value is an assent to that grasped ideal. The proceeding love flows from the grasped evidence and consequent judgment. In analogous manner, the divine Word is a judgment of value resting on *agapē*, Loving Intelligence in act, originatively constituting divine being. Divine Proceeding Love, the Holy Spirit, is spirated from such a dual origin: from Loving Grasp and the divine ‘Yes, this is very good!’

Now, as I have already indicated, I wish to suggest that the four-point theological hypothesis refines this notion of a ‘psychological analogy’ for the divine processions by

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15 Ibid.

16 Bernard Lonergan, ‘The Mediation of Christ in Prayer,’ *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-1964*, vol. 6 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996) 171.

providing us with a new set of created analogues for the divine relations. That is to say, in addition to the natural analogues found in cognitional and existential process, including the dynamic state of being in love, there are created analogues that are also participations in the divine relations that ground imitations of those relations in history. These analogues are already in the supernatural order. Thus:

(1) The secondary act of existence of the incarnate Word provides a supernatural analogue of divine paternity. But it is also a created participation in divine paternity, and as such it grounds an imitation *ad extra*, beyond divinity and in history, of that relation of Father to Son, Speaker to Word, within divinity.

(2) The dynamic state of being in love in an unqualified fashion, grasping evidence that only a lover can grasp and uttering an unconditional assent to a particular mode of existential self-constitution,<sup>17</sup> is a supernatural analogue of active spiration. But it is also a created participation in that divine active spiration, and as such it grounds an imitation *ad extra*, beyond divinity and in history, of that divine relation of Father and Son to the Holy Spirit, of ‘breathing’ or ‘spirating’ to ‘what is breathed or spirated,’ of Notional Loving (*notionaliter diligere*) to Proceeding Love (*amor procedens*).

(3) The acts of love that cumulatively and progressively proceed from such a dynamic state are a supernatural analogue of the passive spiration of the Holy Spirit from Father and Son in God. But the habit of charity is also a created participation in divine passive spiration, and as such it grounds an imitation *ad extra*, beyond divinity and in history, of the relation of the Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son, a relation of receiving what is breathed forth from Father and Son in divine eternal procession. I am reminded of the beautiful first stanza of a hymn:

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17 That mode of self-constitution will be specified further in what follows, with the help of René Girard.

Breathe on me, breath of God,  
 Fill me with life anew,  
 That I may love the things you love,  
 And do what you would do.<sup>18</sup>

(4) Finally, the light of glory that is the created condition of beatific vision in the glory of the saints is a supernatural analogue of filiation. But it is also a created participation in divine Sonship, and as such it grounds an imitation *ad extra*, beyond divinity but also beyond history, of another divine relation, that of the Son to the Father.

The four created supernatural realities are so intimately linked with the divine relations that we may say that they are the created consequent conditions that allow us to speak truthfully of the presence of the divine Trinity in history and in its fulfilment.

Of course, in this supernatural order, a *psychological* analogy for the divine processions and relations can be had only from the created participations in active and passive spiration, since we have no access to the data of consciousness of the incarnate Word or of the saints in glory. But all four of these created supernatural realities are more than analogues; they are, Lonergan says, participations that ground imitations.

In itself the notion of spiritual autonomy is fairly simple. I will give more rudimentary examples that are effectively used by Lonergan, drawing upon Aquinas, to identify the analogy in the order of nature. While these examples are not what I am concentrating upon in this paper, since I wish to speak of graced imitations of the divine relations themselves, nonetheless we can understand the supernatural equivalent of a grasp of evidence regarding what it would be good for me to be, the consequent assent, and the love that flows from both, only by analogy with what we know of our nature

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18 Hymn for Midmorning Prayer in the *The Liturgy of the Hours*, as in book III, Ordinary Time (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1975) 659.

precisely by using our natural intellectual abilities. In this sense, even when we acknowledge, as I wish to suggest, that the supernatural analogy is the more satisfactory analogy for the Trinity, we can still vindicate the tradition's insistence upon basing theological understanding in analogies from nature.

At the level of factual judgment, then, what is the difference between a rash judgment and a reasonable one? A rash judgment is rash because it is offered without sufficient evidence. A reasonable judgment is one that is so grounded in sufficient evidence that by a kind of intellectual necessity or, perhaps better, exigency – what in *Insight* Lonergan calls an immanent *Anankē*<sup>19</sup> – the judgment inevitably issues forth in a mind that is open to truth. The difference shows precisely what is meant by *emanatio intelligibilis*, by one instance of autonomous spiritual procession, for this is precisely what is lacking in a rash judgment and what is present in a true judgment. Whoever grasps sufficient evidence for a judgment, precisely by so grasping, proffers a true judgment with an intellectually conscious exigency. But Lonergan's point is that we all know *from experience* the difference between a rash judgment and a sound judgment.<sup>20</sup> And so we can grasp by reflection on experience what is meant by a procession of act from act: in this case, a procession of the act of judgment from grasp of evidence.

Again, on the level of understanding and conceptualization, what is the difference between parroting a definition from memory and proposing one because one has understood something? This difference, too, is something we all know from experience. It is the difference between uttering sounds based on sensitive habit, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, expressing what one has understood and doing so in different ways and by the use of examples, where everything that is said is directed and even, as it

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<sup>19</sup> Lonergan, *Insight* 356.

<sup>20</sup> 'Omnes enim *experiendo* novimus ...' Lonergan, *De Deo trino: Pars systematica* 70, emphasis added. See Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics* 134-37.

were, necessitated by the act of understanding. Again from experience, we can know what is meant by a procession of act from act: in this case, a procession of concepts from understanding.

Finally, we also know from experience the difference between an inordinate act of choice that is repugnant to reason and one that is ordered, correct, obligatory, even holy. When we intelligently grasp and reasonably approve something that we know is good, we are obliged to it in such a way that, should we choose against the dictates of reason, we would be irrational and irresponsible, and should we follow these dictates, we would be rational and responsible. In this case there would be an autonomous spiritual procession of good decision from an authentic judgment of value.

What, then, is the generic character of the procession in our own consciousness that we experience and that subsequent reflection upon our experience enables us to recognize as the differential between being intelligent and being stupid, being reasonable and being silly, being responsible and being irresponsible? How is it to be defined? Lonergan's definition of 'emanatio intelligibilis' is: *the conscious origin [that is, procession] of a real, natural, and conscious act from a real, natural, and conscious act, both within intellectual consciousness and also by virtue of intellectual consciousness itself as determined by the prior act.*<sup>21</sup> I will suggest one change in this definition, but it occurs twice: rather than speaking of 'intellectual consciousness,' I will speak of 'the spiritual dimension of consciousness.' Thus I would define 'autonomous spiritual procession' as *the conscious origination of a real, natural, and conscious act from a real, natural, and conscious act, both within the spiritual dimension of consciousness and also by virtue of the spiritual dimension of consciousness itself as determined by the prior act.* (The reason for preferring to speak of the spiritual dimension will perhaps become clearer in the next section, where we emphasize that there are two dimensions to consciousness.)

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21 Ibid. 141.

The same definition applies to the order of grace that is referred to by the four-point hypothesis, in that there we find the procession of loving assent from loving grasp and the procession of acts of love from grasp-and-assent considered as the one principle of love. The three examples that I provided from Lonergan's Latin text are taken from the order of natural spiritual process: understanding, judging, and deciding. The examples that are derived from spelling out the created participations in active and passive spiration are taken from the order of grace, but again they consist in acts equivalent on the supernatural level to grasping evidence (understanding), assenting (judgment of value), and loving (decision).

The psychological analogy ... has its starting point in that higher synthesis of intellectual, rational, and moral consciousness that is the dynamic state of being in love. Such love manifests itself in its judgments of value. And the judgments are carried out in decisions that are acts of loving. Such is the analogy found in the creature.<sup>22</sup>

One instance of the dynamic state of being in love is the gift of sanctifying grace that the four-point hypothesis construes as a created participation in divine active spiration. From that love there flows evidence perceived by a lover, from which one's judgments of value proceed as act from act. What proceeds from this created participation in active spiration are the decisions that are acts of loving, and as such created participations in passive spiration. The supernatural analogy found in the creature imitates by participation the entire life of the triune God.

If it is only by the grace of this created imitation that the natural transcendental unfolding of our spiritual aspirations remains authentic, still this supernatural *imitatio* is understood by analogy with an imitation in the very order of nature, an imitation that lies,

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22 Lonergan, 'Christology Today: Methodological Reflections' 93.



first, within actively intelligent, actively reasonable, actively deliberative consciousness. Here Lonergan draws a distinction between the fundamental light of human consciousness and the further determinations of that same light. In the context of cognitive process, that fundamental light is what Aristotle and then Aquinas called agent intellect, which Lonergan explicitly identifies with the desire to know. The desire to know is a created participation of uncreated light and is the source of all our wonder, inquiry, and reflection. In its authentic functioning it is pure, detached, disinterested. Built into its constitution, as it were, are the most general principles that are operative independently of any determination from experience: identity, non-contradiction, and sufficient reason. But it is also the transcendental notion of value, setting the criterion not only for cognitive process but also for decisions. And the ‘precept’ that is built into it at that level is, in Thomist terms, that good is to be done and evil to be avoided. The entire reality of this fundamental light in its active or intentional dimensions is expressed in the transcendental precepts or imperatives that Lonergan expresses thus: ‘Be attentive, Be intelligent, Be reasonable, Be responsible.’ Thus the ‘principles’ constitutively built into this fundamental light function not deductively but heuristically in actively intelligent and deliberative consciousness. They are not principles in the sense of premises from which conclusions are drawn in a logically consistent manner. While we have to articulate them in premises if we are to talk about them, the premises simply express universal features of intellectual, rational, and existential dynamism that function spontaneously in all genuine inquiry and deliberation.

Our definition of autonomous spiritual procession contains the phrase *by virtue of the spiritual dimension of consciousness itself as determined by the prior act*. The fundamental light of the spiritual dimensions of consciousness is the ‘by virtue of the spiritual dimension of consciousness itself’ referred to in this definition. But what is consciously operative in us lies not only in this light. It is also further determined by our conscious acts themselves. We are determined as intellectually, rationally, and morally

conscious and consciously active and operative: materially or potentially by the objects of sensation, with an incipient and devalued formal and actual intelligibility in the reception of meanings and values,<sup>23</sup> formally by our own acts of understanding as a release to our own inquiry, more formally still as these acts of understanding give rise to the act that is the first inner word (act from act), then actually by our own grasp of evidence and the judgments that proceed from that grasp (again, act from act), and effectively and constitutively by our deliberations and decisions flowing from our judgments of value (act from act once more). Thus, if the dynamism of the spiritual dimension of consciousness lies in the light of intelligence, reasonableness, and moral responsibility within us, the further determinations added by our own activities are in part what the definition refers to when it describes this consciousness as determined by the prior acts from which, by *emanatio intelligibilis*, by autonomous spiritual procession, there proceed other acts. Thus the notion of *emanatio intelligibilis* is what Aquinas is illustrating when he writes, ‘Whenever we understand, by the mere fact that we do understand, *something proceeds within us*, which is the conception of the thing understood, issuing from our intellectual power and proceeding from its knowledge.’<sup>24</sup> Lonergan expands:

Accordingly, when we understand and by the very fact that we understand, from our intellectual power, which is the general light of intellectual consciousness, and from the knowledge contained in the act of understanding that adds a determination to the general light, *there proceeds within our intellectual consciousness a conception or definition of the reality understood*. Similarly, when we grasp that the evidence is

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23 On this suggested refinement of Lonergan’s cognitional theory drawing largely on Heidegger, see Robert M. Doran, ‘Reception and Elemental Meaning,’ in *Toronto Journal of Theology* 20 (2004) 133-57.

24 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1, q. 27, a. 1.

sufficient, by the very fact that we grasp it, and from the exigency of intellectual light as determined through that grasp, *there proceeds within our intellectual consciousness either a true affirmation or a true negative assertion*. Similarly again, when we judge some good as obligatory, by the very fact that we so judge, through our intellectuality, our rationality, *we spirate an act of will*.<sup>25</sup>

As within intellectual consciousness (Lonergan's expression), or within the order of spirit (my preferred more generic way of speaking), the procession is constituted by intellectual, rational, and existential acts, not by sensitive acts. The latter are not left behind, of course, but sublated into the richer context furnished by intelligent, reasonable, responsible acts. 'Sublation' is a term that Lonergan adopts from Karl Rahner, where its meaning is not the Hegelian sense of *Aufhebung* but something much more straightforward: '... what sublates goes beyond what is sublated, introduces something new and distinct, puts everything on a new basis, yet so far from interfering with the sublated or destroying it, on the contrary needs it, includes it, preserves all its proper features and properties, and carries them forward to a fuller realization within a richer context.'<sup>26</sup> Our one consciousness is not homogeneous, but is diversified in accord with the diverse nature of its acts.

The emanation is not only conscious; it is a conscious procession (*origo*), and it occurs in virtue of the dynamism of consciousness itself. The emergence of one real, natural, and conscious act from another real, natural, and conscious act is itself conscious and occurs in virtue of conscious dynamism itself. Here we need only revert to the examples that Lonergan provides: the difference between a rash judgment and a reasonable one, the difference between repeating a memorized definition and uttering it

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25 Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics* 139, emphasis added.

26 Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 243.

as something one has understood, and the difference between disordered and responsible choices. In this way consciousness *mediates* the procession. But the mediation that renders possible an autonomous *spiritual* procession or emanation is a mediation that occurs in virtue of the dynamism of the spiritual dimension of human consciousness itself, a dynamism in the order of spirit, and not in virtue of the dynamics of sensitive consciousness. We will see more momentarily about the two dimensions of consciousness, but suffice it for now to say that one act can proceed from another within sensitive consciousness as well, but the procession does not possess the characteristics constitutive of an *emanatio intelligibilis*. From seeing a large, fierce-looking animal on the loose there spontaneously arises in sensitive consciousness a sense of fear, precisely *because* one has seen the animal; and so one conscious act proceeds from another *because of and in accordance with* the first act. But in sensitive consciousness this occurs by some automatically functioning law of a particular nature. (The same may be said of the triangular nature of mimetic desire, which, as I will emphasize, functions precisely in this sensitive, psychic, and now intersubjective or ‘interindividual’ domain.) But when one real, natural, and conscious *intelligent or reasonable or responsible* act proceeds from another real, natural, and conscious *intelligent or reasonable or responsible* act, the link is constituted not by an automatically functioning law or mechanism of human sensitivity and intersubjectivity but by the *self-governing, autonomous, and transcendental* exigencies of intelligence and reasonableness and responsibility, according to which our integrity as human subjects is a function of our ordered allegiance to complete intelligibility, truth, being, and goodness. The transcendental laws of human spirituality commit us to a set of objectives that embrace everything, the concrete universe of being. Our fidelity to these exigencies can be violated, for our performance in this realm is not a function of specific and automatically functioning laws but is such that in the relevant acts the human spirit is determinative of itself and in that sense autonomous. That performance can be cut off, strangled, rendered impotent, by one’s own existential

decisions, by major defaults in one's cultural and social situations, or by the interference of that other type of desire on which, as we will see, Girard has thrown so much light. That spiritual spontaneity is regulated, not by being bound to any automatic response, but only insofar as it is actually constituted by a transcendental desire for being and value. It rules itself, insofar as under God's agency it determines itself to its own acts according to the exigencies of its own being as spiritual. But insofar as this is the case one conscious act will arise or proceed from another conscious act through the mediation of intelligent, reasonable, responsible consciousness itself.

### **3 The Duality of Consciousness**

I indicated at the beginning that I would attempt here (1) to strengthen the theoretical status of the mimetic paradigm by inserting it into Lonergan's four-point systematic-theological hypothesis and (2) to release the potential of mimetic theory to clarify the constitution of both dramatic bias and psychic conversion. Enough has been said for now about the four-point hypothesis and about its potential contribution to our analogical understanding both of the divine relations and of a peculiar variant of mimesis that is caused by the gift of God's grace, an imitation of God grounded in created participations in the divine relations. What is required now is to specify a way in which the mimetic paradigm relates to these theological considerations. And it is essential that I begin with a discussion of the duality of consciousness, for the spiritual dimension of consciousness, both spontaneous (act from potency) and autonomous (act from act), is not the whole of consciousness, and the mimetic paradigm is proximately pertinent to another dimension. It is because the two dimensions are so intimately related in the one consciousness of the human being that the mimetic paradigm can be inserted into the four-point theological hypothesis. It is in the context of talk about the autonomy of spiritual operations that we find a fruitful encounter with the mimetic theory of René Girard. Girard has in effect

introduced a challenge to the project of self-appropriation initiated by Lonergan. For there is an interference of acquisitively mimetic desire with the unfolding of the transcendental orientation to the intelligible, the true and the real, the good, and God, and Girard with ruthless precision has captured the dynamics, indeed the mechanism, of that interference. But there is an *imago Dei*, an *imitatio Dei* – ‘imago’ and ‘imitatio’ are from the same root – that is natural, that resides in our spiritual nature, where ‘nature’ is understood in the Aristotelian sense of an immanent principle of movement and of rest. The *imago* or *imitatio Dei* is not the whole of that spiritual nature, for that nature is ‘the human spirit as raising and answering questions’ and so as potency in the realm of spiritual things.<sup>27</sup> But there are moments in which that nature precisely as nature imitates pure act, however remotely: when from understanding as act there proceeds an inner word of conceptualization as act; when from the grasp of evidence as sufficient there proceeds a judgment; and when from the judgment of value there proceeds a decision. And that natural image can be used as an analogy from which we may understand the more radical image that is also an imitation grounded in a created participation in the divine relations of active and passive spiration themselves.

I wish, then, to cite a relevant passage from *The Triune God: Systematics*. ‘... we are conscious in two ways: in one way, through our sensibility, we undergo rather passively what we sense and imagine, our desires and fears, our delights and sorrows, our joys and sadness; in another way, through our intellectuality, we are more active when we consciously inquire in order to understand, understand in order to utter a word, weigh evidence in order to judge, deliberate in order to choose, and exercise our will in order to act.’<sup>28</sup> Let us call the first way of being conscious sensitive or psychic, and the second

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27 See Bernard Lonergan, ‘Natural Right and Historical Mindedness,’ in *A Third Collection*, at 172.

28 Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics* 139.

spiritual. Moreover, within both sensitive and spiritual process, a distinction is to be drawn between the emergence of act from potency and the emergence of act from act. At the level of the spiritual, this becomes a distinction of spontaneous and autonomous processions. Spontaneous procession is exemplified in the procession of understanding from questions; it is a procession of act from potency. Autonomous procession is the procession of act from act, such as is exemplified in the instances that Lonergan presents from the order of natural process and in the created participations in active and passive spiration. In each form of the psychological analogy, natural and supernatural, what matters is a procession of judgment of value from grasp of evidence and a procession of love from the grasp and judgment functioning as one principle of commitment. In the realm of autonomous spiritual procession,

... the proper principle of intellectual emanation [that is, of the spiritual procession] is not the object [or someone else mediating the object, as in Girard's mimetic theory] but the subject ... intellectually [spiritually] conscious in act ... Because intellectual [spiritual] consciousness owes it to itself to express to itself its own understanding, and to express it truly, it follows that what is being understood ought to be expressed truly. Because intellectual [spiritual] consciousness owes it to itself to bestow its own love rightly, it follows that what is judged as truly good ought also to be loved. And if perchance understanding is deficient or judgment erroneous, an unknown obligation does not prevail in such a way that one is duty-bound to act against one's conscience; rather, a known obligation prevails, so that one is duty-bound to judge in accordance with the evidence one has and to choose in accordance with one's judgment.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics* 213, 215.

And most importantly, ‘the autonomy of human consciousness is indeed subordinate, not to every object whatsoever, but to the infinite subject in whose image it has been made and whom it is bound to imitate.’<sup>30</sup> The notion of autonomous spiritual procession on which the psychological analogies are built does not proceed from a grasp of sensitive consciousness or psychic process, but from a grasp of intellectual, rational, and moral consciousness or spiritual process.

#### **4 The Dialectic of Desire**

There follows on the duality of consciousness a dialectic of desire. The integrity of the spiritual process that I have been speaking of is a function of fidelity to a transcendental orientation to the intelligible, the true and the real, and the good. This transcendental orientation is a participation in uncreated light. It is so first in its spontaneous movements from potency to act, as in the movement from inquiry to insight. This preliminary created participation in uncreated light is ‘the source in us that gives rise to all our wonder, all our inquiry, all our reflection.’<sup>31</sup> It is our desire to know, our anticipation of being; it is also our desire for the good, the anticipation of value. In us those anticipations are potential. Ultimately, they are what the Scholastics called obediential potency for a fulfilment that can be given only by God.

The transcendental orientation is a participation in uncreated light even more notably as it proceeds from act to act, since something remotely analogous to procession from act to act is precisely what constitutes the life of the triune God. I say ‘remotely analogous’ because in God we do not find procession from one act to another absolutely distinct act, as in ourselves. Rather, within the one divine act we posit processions based

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30 Ibid. 215.

31 Ibid. 139.



exclusively on mutual relations of origin. But it is the procession from act to distinct act in human consciousness that provides the analogy for doing so.

These transcendental desires, even when they are awakened through mimetic process, are, when authentic, both natural and, in their inner constitution, non-imitative.

But Lonergan emphasizes that there are other desires that would interfere with the unfolding of the transcendental, spiritual, autonomous, active desire for being and value, the pure, unrestricted, detached, disinterested desire for what is and for what is good. We can approach this problem by recalling what Lonergan says about the two ways of being conscious. The discrimination of these two ‘ways of being conscious’ is an extraordinarily sensitive and delicate business. For the first ‘way of being conscious’ permeates the second, and it does so either in support of the transcendental orientation to intelligibility, truth, being, and the good, or in conflict with that orientation. Again, and more precisely, it precedes, accompanies, and overarches the intentional operations that constitute the second ‘way of being conscious.’<sup>32</sup>

Distinguishing intellectually and negotiating existentially the two ‘ways of being conscious’ is, then, a delicate exercise, one calling for what the Christian spiritual tradition has called discernment. For what ‘we undergo rather passively’ in ‘what we sense and imagine, our desires and fears, our delights and sorrows, our joys and sadness’ affects the entire range of our spiritual orientation as it actually unfolds. Under optimal circumstances, this psychic dimension bolsters and supports the spiritual ‘way of being conscious,’ where ‘we consciously inquire in order to understand, understand in order to utter a word, weigh evidence in order to judge, deliberate in order to choose, and exercise our will in order to act.’ But those optimal circumstances are rare indeed, and to the extent that they do not obtain, we can speak of a statistical near-inevitability of distortion

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32 See Lonergan, ‘Natural Right and Historical Mindedness,’ *A Third Collection* at 174-75; also ‘Mission and the Spirit,’ *ibid.* at 29-30.

precisely in the spiritual dimensions of human operation. There *is* a realm in which human desire and human operation are autonomous, not in the ‘modern’ sense of a self-asserting effort at what Ernest Becker called the *causa sui* project,<sup>33</sup> but in the sense of our operating under transcendental exigencies for the intelligible, the true and the real, and the good. There are moments in that transcendental operating in which act flows from act: concept from understanding, judgment from grasp of sufficient evidence, decision from judgment of value. But that realm, as Lonergan says of human authenticity, is ever precarious; it is reached always by withdrawing from inauthenticity. It is the realm of the pure, detached, disinterested desire to know that Lonergan highlights in *Insight* and of the equally pure, detached, disinterested transcendental intention of value. It is the source and locus of all natural analogies for understanding the divine processions. But no one, not even the greatest saint, lives in that realm untroubled, serene, and free of temptation and distortion, precisely because of the complex relations between the two ways of being conscious.

## **5 The Significance of Girard’s Work within This Context**

Girard challenges students of Lonergan’s intentionality analysis to face the difficulties that some might bring against an appeal to an ‘autonomous’ natural dimension of consciousness, for he has called attention to what I believe are the principal dynamics of psychic interference with autonomous spiritual processions. He invites us also to clarify precisely in what consists the created participation in the divine relations that ground a supernatural imitation of the divine. At the level of the passive undergoing of ‘our desires and fears, our delights and sorrows, our joys and sadness,’ our desire is mimetic, but not imitative of the Trinitarian processions. The latter imitation is a gift grounded in what de

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33 Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: The Free Press, 1973) *passim*.

facto is a created participation in the divine relations. But the gift is itself pertinent to a healing from the deviations of mimetic contagion.

Accepting the invitations that Girard provides will help us to fine-tune our portrayal both of the relations between the two ways of being conscious and of the supernatural psychological analogy for understanding the Trinity. But my particular question here is, *What is it to imitate God, and how does that differ from the forms of mimesis that Girard discusses?*

A few preliminary comments are in order concerning the potential theological significance of Girard's work.

### *5.1 The Theological Significance of Girard's Work*

Among contemporary authors, then, Girard in particular has called our attention to the extremely precarious nature of human claims to autonomous subjectivity. These precautions are salutary for anyone hoping to resurrect the psychological analogy in Trinitarian theology. But they are not foreign to Lonergan's own expression of a hermeneutic of suspicion. For not only is human authenticity, which is our most prized possession and which entails the autonomy of processions of act from act, ever precarious, ever a withdrawal from unauthenticity, but also 'every successful withdrawal only brings to light the need for still further withdrawals.'<sup>34</sup>

Next, while Lonergan has called attention to authenticity and unauthenticity in the realms of understanding, truth, moral development, and religion, that is, in the areas that are positively treated when he speaks of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion,<sup>35</sup> I

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34 Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 110.

35 Ibid.: 'Our advance in understanding is also the elimination of oversights and misunderstandings. Our advance in truth is also the correction of mistakes and errors.'

have called attention to a distinct dimension of the subject, of authenticity, and of conversion. This distinct dimension affects primarily Lonergan's first 'way of being conscious,' and so I have spoken of a *psychic conversion*. And Girard's work on the nature of human desire will give us a better purchase, I think, on this psychic dimension of desire than other current or recent explorations. But the false mimesis and deviated transcendence of which he speaks easily invade intellectual, moral, and religious discourse, and so being precise with Girard on these issues will help us isolate much more clearly just where in consciousness the genuine *imago Dei* really lies and purify that dimension of the contagion it easily undergoes due to mimetic interference. For while the *imago Dei* is implanted in the very nature of the spiritual dimension of human consciousness, it is not some automatic functioning that we need locate simply through introspective analysis or some other technique. In this vein, Lonergan writes of the end of the age of innocence, in which it was presumed that human authenticity could be taken for granted.<sup>36</sup>

I proceed, then, on the assumptions (1) that what Girard has written about desire concerns the first 'way of being conscious,' that is, the sensitive, psychic dimension of consciousness, but also (2) that this dimension penetrates our spiritual orientation to the intelligible, the true and the real, and the good, for better or for worse, and so (3) that diagnosing these complex interrelations in concrete self-appropriation will help release the *imago Dei* in historical performance in history.

The major component of Girard's worldview is the notion of mimetic desire. Many, perhaps most, of our desires are not autonomous or innate, but copied from others.

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Our moral development is through repentance for our sins. Genuine religion is discovered and realized by redemption from the many traps of religious aberration.'

36 See Bernard Lonergan, 'The Ongoing Genesis of Methods,' *A Third Collection*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985) passim.

‘If I desire a particular object, I do not covet it on its own merits but because I “mimic,” or imitate, the desire of someone I have chosen as a model. That person – whether real or imaginary, legendary or historical – becomes the mediator of my desire, and the relationship in which I am involved is essentially “triangular.”’<sup>37</sup>

Mimesis in itself (or in the abstract) is neutral. But *acquisitive* or *appropriative* mimesis leads to violence, whether overt or covert. Acquisitive mimesis, focused on the object because of the model or mediator, becomes conflictual mimesis when the object drops out of sight and the subject becomes concerned only or at least primarily with the model or mediator. Conflictual mimesis is contagious. It can infect a community, an institution, a governing body, a religious establishment, and it can endanger the welfare and even the survival of the groups it affects, at least until the focus turns on one individual or group, namely, the scapegoat whose immolation, exclusion, or expulsion brings a precarious peace. Such is the basic schema that governs much of Girard’s thinking.

I believe that this vision will figure centrally in future efforts at constructing a soteriology, and that it will do so more effectively the more its theoretical status can be strengthened by integrating this paradigm into a set of theological hypotheses. Thus here I am attempting to relate the mimetic paradigm to the four-point hypothesis, with its talk of imitating God through created participations in the divine relations. But even in its present state, the paradigm fills out and enriches Lonergan’s theology of the ‘law of the Cross.’ For in Girard’s view, which I find persuasive, there is a progressive revelation in biblical texts of precisely this set of mimetic mechanisms, which finally become unveiled for all to see – and so lose their power – in the crucifixion of Jesus. This liberation is one

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<sup>37</sup> Richard Golsan, *René Girard and Myth* (New York: Routledge, 2002) 1. Golsan’s book is an excellent introduction to Girard’s work. Also recommended is Chris Fleming, *René Girard: Violence and Mimesis* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2004).

element of the salvation that the cross and resurrection of Jesus effect. Perhaps through Girard's help we will come to see it as the central element in soteriology. But for the moment my concern is exclusively with the assistance Girard gives us in gaining precision on the notions of desire and imitation, in order (1) to isolate, as distinct from acquisitive mimetic desire, the dimension of human consciousness from which genuine analogies may be drawn for an obscure understanding of the Trinitarian processions and especially the dimension from which a supernatural analogy can be constructed, and (2) to relate Girard's mimetic view to this dimension, and in so doing to enhance the theoretical status of the mimetic position.

### 5.2 *A Brief Primer of Girard's Work*

A bit more should be said about Girard's position.

The mediation of mimetic desire can be either external or internal, in Girard's terminology. While Girard groups mediated desires into these two fundamental categories, he allows that within this division there 'can be an infinite number of secondary distinctions.'<sup>38</sup> There is *external mediation* of desire when the distance between the subject and the model is 'sufficient to eliminate any contact between the two spheres of possibilities of which the mediator and the subject occupy the respective centers.' And there is *internal mediation* when this distance 'is sufficiently reduced to allow these two spheres to penetrate each other more or less profoundly.'<sup>39</sup> The 'distance' referred to in either case is, of course, not primarily physical but psychological or symbolic. Thus, to cite perhaps Girard's favorite example, Quixote and Sancho are

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38 René Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1966) 9.

39 Ibid.

physically together, but still there is no rivalry between them, and their harmony is never seriously troubled, even as Sancho borrows almost all of his desires from Quixote, who himself is imitating the legendary Amadis of Gaul. ‘The hero of external mediation proclaims aloud the true nature of his or her desire.’<sup>40</sup> One is proud to be the disciple of so worthy a model, as was Quixote with regard to Amadis and as is the Christian with respect to Jesus. The hero of internal mediation, on the other hand, carefully hides his or her efforts to imitate a model. While *all* mimetic desire runs the risk of impairing its victims’ perceptions of reality, since the desirability of the object stems not from its own merits but from its designation by the mediator, in internal mediation the result is always conflict, even hatred. That is not the case in external mediation. In internal mediation the rivals can come to resemble each other through the identity of their desires, so that finally they are no more than each other’s doubles. The actual source of any desire is so obscured that the subject may even reverse the logical and chronological order of desires in order to hide his or her imitation. That is, one may assert that one’s own desire is prior to that of the rival whose desire one is imitating, and that the mediator is responsible for the rivalry. Everything that originates with the mediator is systematically belittled although still secretly desired. The mediator becomes a shrewd and diabolical enemy who tries to rob the subject of his or her most prized possessions and obstinately thwarts his or her most legitimate ambitions. Desiring individuals come to believe in the autonomy of their desires, and so deny the importance of the mediator.

Imitation thus occurs not only in the sphere of representation or knowledge, as Plato emphasized, but also in the sphere of appropriating objects to ourselves. We learn what to desire by copying the desires of others. Our desires are rooted not in their objects nor in ourselves but in a third party, the model or mediator, whose desire we imitate in the hope of resembling him or her. Thus the ground of desire resides, not in any one

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40 Ibid. 10.

subject, but *between* subjects. This throws into question the intrinsic desirability of the object, recasting its value as a product of the interpersonal, or in Girard's term 'interindividual,' relation. It recasts object-relations theories, including Freudian psychoanalysis.

The notion of mimetic desire was worked out by Girard in the book *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, which contains studies of Cervantes, Dante, Stendhal, Proust, and Dostoyevsky. The book was first published in French in 1961, with the title *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque*. Those novels that portray desire as spontaneous and autonomous<sup>41</sup> embody the *mensonge romantique*, the romantic lie. Those novels that acknowledge that desire is triangular convey the *vérité romanesque*. The romantic lie valorizes all instances of originality and spontaneity as indicators of personal superiority. The romantic construal of desire is that of a straight line running between a desiring subject and an intrinsically valuable desired object. The *vérité romanesque*, on the other hand, describes the interindividual situation of desire. The conclusion to such a work may introduce a new mode of *interpersonal* relations, one that is not predicated on the slavish but largely unwitting imitation of others, one that rather displays an authentic negotiation of this intersubjective field. We cannot attain total independence from others, in some sort of putative heroism that is really self-possessed pride. The latter is still thoroughly

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41 Note Girard's way of conflating the notions 'spontaneous' and 'autonomous,' whereas Lonergan distinguishes them. It is only the *processions of act from act in the spiritual realm* that Lonergan calls autonomous, since these processions are governed not by the interindividual field that constitutes the first way of being conscious nor by the emergence of answers from questions, of act from potency, that constitutes the spontaneity even of the second way of being conscious, but by the transcendental laws of the human spirit as it moves from experience through understanding and judgment to right decision.



entangled with the Other, in an attempt to distinguish oneself from them. What we can attain is a *purified relationality* that is not caught up in imitative violence. Novels that distinguish these components in human relations are for Girard far more faithful to the true human condition than those that treat desire as spontaneous, autonomous, and directly object-related.

Relationships of internal mediation can become so complex and impossible that the only way out of the bind is to break the circle of desire. But even this can be a ploy. Renunciation can take place for the sake of the desire itself. The goal can be to discourage further imitation, but if the object desired is another person, this renunciation can actually occur for the sake of secretly opening the road to the desired object by making the desired object desire oneself. One who feigns indifference can seem to the desired object to be so self-possessed that this seeming self-mastery and peace becomes itself an object of desire on the part of the subject's own object of desire. *The object now desires the subject who desires the object.* Depending on the ontological emptiness of the object and the feigned or even real self-mastery of the subject, the object may want to absorb the very being of the subject into his or her own. The subject who was imitating the model or mediator of desire now becomes imitated by the object, desire for whom was mediated by the model or mediator.

It is here, in these complications, that Girard finds the source of all mimetic desire. Imitative desire, wherever it occurs, is always a desire to *be* Another because of a profound sense of the radical insufficiency of one's own very being. To covet what the other desires is to covet the other's essence. In the first case this was a matter of the subject desiring the person who is also desired by the model or mediator: the subject really wants not only what the mediator wants or perhaps has, but even what the mediator is. In the second case, when the subject feigns being above it all, the object now desires the self-sufficiency that the subject seems to be displaying. In either case, this conception of desire presupposes a radical insufficiency in the very being of the desiring individuals.

They must be painfully conscious of their own emptiness to crave so desperately the fullness of being that supposedly lies in others. This attraction to the ‘putative autarky’<sup>42</sup> of the other Girard calls *metaphysical desire*, because the figures onto whom it is projected mediate being for us; it is via them that we seek to become real, and it is through wanting their very being that we come to imitate them. The wish to absorb, or to be absorbed into, the substance of the Other implies an insuperable revulsion for one’s own substance. Metaphysical desire is masochism or pseudo-masochism: a will to self-destruction as one becomes something or someone other than what one is. In terms quite pertinent to the present paper, Chris Fleming writes that as the desire to be absorbed

suffers disappointment after disappointment, the metaphysical quest is not abandoned: rather, the masochist merely seeks out more powerful mediators from which to attain real, substantial being ... The masochist ... is a casualty of metaphysical desire; he hopes that realizing the desires that he sees in the Other will bring about the hoped-for self-sufficiency and allow him to participate in his divine being. But since the self-sufficiency, divinity, or plenitude that the masochist attributes to the model is illusory, his project to attain the same is doomed from the outset. The masochist vaguely perceives the fruitlessness of his quest but fails to give it up because to do so would mean that the promise of salvation would have to be given up along with it.<sup>43</sup>

Moreover, the subject who has been rejected can choose to be the tormentor. This is sadism or pseudo-sadism, but it backfires sooner or later.

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42 Fleming, *René Girard: Violence and Mimesis* 24.

43 Ibid. 25-26.

Pseudo-sadism emerges at the point when the masochist, who has worshipped violence, begins to emulate those who have blocked his access to objects of desire ... The sadist looks for imitators whom he can torture in the same way that he thought he was tortured prior to adopting the role. Indeed, it is the sadist's prior experience as victim that suggests the appropriate course of action. Yet, the emergence of sadism, of this 'dialectical reversal,' is by no means the simple 'opposite' of masochism: it is, rather, the same condition at a different moment. Nor is the movement from masochism to sadism stable or irreversible; both masochism and sadism are subject to the same double imperative – of wanting to overcome the rival and simultaneously to be overcome *by* the rival ...<sup>44</sup>

There is, then, a radical ontological sickness at the core of mimetic desire, and especially internal mimetic desire.<sup>45</sup> In the later works of Dostoyevsky, the heroes' wish to be absorbed into the substance of the Other reflects an insuperable revulsion for one's own substance. There can be no final victory, no fulfilment in the world of mediated desire. The only triumph possible is the complete renunciation of mimetic desire and of the ontological malady that accompanies it.

Girard's readings of great novelists gave rise to a new psychological view that he calls interdividual. It begins with a critique of Freudian psychoanalysis. Despite Girard's respect for Freud's acuteness of observation, he claims that Freud hovered around the basic insight without ever coming to acknowledge it. The sexual drive is, says Girard, 'subordinate to the mimetic process, which plays a much more vital and decisive role in

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44 Ibid. 28.

45 For material in this and the next two paragraphs, see Golson, *René Girard and Myth* 13-16.

psychic processes and human actions.<sup>46</sup> The Freudian premise that desire is object-oriented is also criticized. The crucial role is that of the mediator, who stimulates and directs the individual's desires toward the object in question. Girard also rejects what he finds to be a fundamental duality in Freudian desire (both Oedipal and narcissistic). There is only one desire, in the realm at least of acquisitive or appropriative wishes, and it is always mimetic.<sup>47</sup>

### *5.3 Preliminary Assessment: Mimesis and the Dialectic of Desire*

Three immediate benefits can be gained by Lonergan students from studying Girard. First, Girard's position shows, I believe, that there is a much greater complexity than might be obvious to the 'two ways of being conscious' to which Lonergan refers. The mimetic model of desire indicates how much more enters into the first 'way of being conscious' than is indicated in Lonergan's brief description in *The Triune God: Systematics*. The ontological sickness pertains to the second way, but mimetic desire manifests how it contaminates the first. In this first way, we are by and large the passive recipients of 'what we sense and imagine, our desires and fears, our delights and sorrows, our joys and sadness.' But that passive reception is not some simple, one-dimensional thing. It is extraordinarily complex, and the mimetic model of desire throws more light on that complexity than any other position of which I am aware.

Second, Girard's position also shows the interrelations of the two 'ways of being conscious.' For one thing, it is ultimately a spiritual emptiness that leads to the derailments of mimetic desire, an emptiness redolent of Augustine's 'You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.' But also, the only

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46 Ibid. 21.

47 See *ibid.* 21-22.

resolution of mimetic violence is the complete renunciation of the rivalry to which triangular acquisitive desire leads us, and that renunciation is an intensely spiritual act flowing from a decision that itself proceeds from a recognition of the facts of the situation. In other words, the resolution of the problems to which acquisitive mimetic desire gives rise takes place through a series of *autonomous spiritual processions* that are precisely the sort of emanations that Lonergan regards as appropriate for the psychological trinitarian analogy.

Finally, I have written fairly abundantly on the topic of psychic conversion and on the dramatic bias from which psychic conversion can help set us free. I have come to regard the vagaries of mimetic desire to which Girard gives us entrance as the principal instances of dramatic bias and also of the psychological components of other forms of bias.<sup>48</sup>

My own appropriation of Girard's work will emphasize that what Lonergan calls the first 'way of being conscious' is precisely interindividual, that psychic development entails the negotiation of this interindividual field, that this negotiation calls upon the operations of the second 'way of being conscious,' that inadequate negotiations of the interindividual field can and will distort this second way, and that authentic negotiation of the same field will allow the second way to flourish in the development of the person. Overcoming or transcending conflictual mimesis in the psychic realm will facilitate the unfolding of genuine attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, and responsibility in the spiritual realm, and so the unfolding of the natural *imago Dei* in its two forms of rational self-consciousness and being in love. But it will also liberate the community from the social sin of conflictual mimesis and institute in the community the social grace of

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48 I would call attention here to the work of John Ranieri, whose several papers at

Lonergan Workshops have explored the relations between the biases and mimetic theory.

participation in divine relations grounding imitations of the triune God. Thus too, in my own construals of psychic conversion, I wish to emphasize that its goal lies precisely in the purified relationality of the interdividuality that transcends conflictual mimesis.

Girard's work obviously raises the question of a radical ontological desire that itself is not mimetic but that is involved in all mimetic desire. Imitative desire is brought on by a sense of spiritual inadequacy that is endemic to the human condition. Perhaps we might say that the story of imitative desire is a story of the successes and failures of *mutual self-mediation*<sup>49</sup> in the attempt, itself completely legitimate, to find the completion of one's being, a completion that the Christian theologian would maintain is possible only by reason of a supernatural participation in divine life itself. Mimetic violence, which springs from imitative desire, is the fate of mutual self-mediation gone wrong. But there is also healthy mutual self-mediation. Our radical ontological insufficiency does not mean that these double binds are inevitable. There is a mediation that can quiet the sense of spiritual inadequacy and enable human relations to be something other than the violent mimesis that Girard depicts. What enables one to renounce mimetic rivalry completely, without using this renunciation as a feigned indifference that is just another way to get what one wants, is precisely the gift of love that enables consistent fidelity to the transcendental imperatives of the spiritual dimensions of consciousness. Perhaps it is precisely here, in the realm of these contaminated relationships and the forgiveness that alone transcends them, that we have the clearest indication that we are going to find as to

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49 See Bernard Lonergan, 'The Mediation of Christ in Prayer,' in *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-1964*, vol. 6 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996) 174-76. I am indebted to conversations with Gilles Mongeau of Regis College, Toronto, for these connections.

whether our love is God's love and so truly without conditions, reservations, restrictions, or qualifications.

As Max Scheler has said in his great book *Ressentiment*, the fact of choosing a model for oneself is the result of a tendency common to all people to compare oneself with others; all jealousy, all ambition, and even an ideal like the imitation of Christ are based on such comparisons. But these tendencies are all rooted in an ontological emptiness that only God can fill, and the ultimate meaning of the complicated vagaries of our tortured and tormented relationships lies in the way in which we negotiate this emptiness. There is a way of negotiating it that transcends victimization by the triangular situation that necessarily will be involved in the negotiation. This is the source, for instance, of our fascination with the saints, whether they be those whom the Catholic Church has canonized or those whom we acknowledge, even without such official recognition, as bearing in themselves a certain authentic transcendence of conflictual desire that we can not only admire and respect but also imitate. Think of Ignatius Loyola asking, 'What if I were to do what Saint Francis did, or to do what Saint Dominic did?'<sup>50</sup> The mimetic quality of the question itself is obvious, but we may trust, I hope, that it led to something quite other than the tortured quality of internally mediated relations (however much the sons of Ignatius may have to struggle to overcome mimetic rivalry in their own midst!), that it led, in fact, to autonomous spiritual processions of word and love that were in fact, if not recognized as such, created participations in triune life. Think too of the constant appeals being made in our violent time to Gandhi and Martin Luther King and Dorothy Day, whose way of promoting justice for the victims of history is so different from the way of violence and hatred. Think of Ignatius's own prayer in the *Spiritual Exercises*: '... protesting that I wish and desire, and that it is my deliberate

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<sup>50</sup> *A Pilgrim's Journey: The Autobiography of Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. and ed. Joseph N. Tylenda, S.J. (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1985) 14.

determination ... to *imitate* Thee in bearing all insults and reproaches, and all poverty, as well actual poverty as poverty of spirit, if Thy Divine Majesty be pleased to choose and receive me to this life and state.<sup>51</sup> The sentiment is like that of Don Quixote vis-à-vis Amadis of Gaul,<sup>52</sup> but in Ignatius's case, at least once he overcame his own tendencies to carry things to an unhealthy extreme, it did not lead to distortion of judgment or misperception of reality.

What makes the difference are the transcendental desires of the human spirit, Lonergan's 'second way of being conscious,' and their ground and fulfilment in the gift of God's love. 'All people by nature *desire* to know,' says Aristotle at the very beginning of the *Metaphysics*. This becomes Lonergan's leitmotif throughout the book *Insight*, where he unpacks the dynamics of the desire to know in science, in common sense, and in philosophy, as well as some of the devices that we employ in fleeing understanding when the truth is something we do not want to face. In his later work he extends this transcendental desire, as well as the devices we use to escape its consequences, to the notion of the good.

How is all of this related to the mimetic quality of desire emphasized by Girard? Girard insists, correctly, that almost all learning is based on imitation,<sup>53</sup> and so satisfying the desire to know involves mimetic behavior. In this sense, too, in the realm of representation, mimesis is the essential force of cultural integration, even if in the realm of acquisitive desire it is also the force of destruction and dissolution. But the desire to know and the transcendental intention of value are not themselves a function of

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51 *The Text of the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, trans. John Morris (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1952) 39.

52 See Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* 1-2.

53 René Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, trans. Stephen Bann and Michael Metteer (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987) 7.



acquisitive mimesis. Acquisitiveness is a perversion of these desires. There is such a thing as a detached, disinterested desire to know. It is acknowledged by Girard himself, when he comments that integrating isolated discoveries into a rational framework and transforming them into real knowledge is the true vocation of thought, a vocation which in the end, after periods in which it appears to have run its course, is always reaffirmed.<sup>54</sup> This true vocation of thought reflects something other than acquisitive mimesis. It can, of course, be infected and derailed by acquisitive mimesis, as anyone who has spent any time in any academic institution knows all too well. But in itself the orientation that can become a vocation is natural, non-acquisitive, and in the last analysis not imitative. And Girard's work assumes a greater historical and theoretical significance to the extent that it can be shown to illuminate the deviations from that true vocation that lead us and our thinking astray, that is, when it is related both to the autonomous spiritual processions that at the supernatural level are our created participation in trinitarian life and at the natural level are analogues of that participation and so of the divine processions themselves.

But more must be said, for the significance of imitating the divine relations is not purely inward and spiritual but historical and social.

#### *5.4 Further Assessment: Scapegoating and Social Sin*

In *Violence and the Sacred*<sup>55</sup> and *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, Girard faces the questions of the origins of mimetic desire and of its impact on cultural and social institutions. It is here that he discovers the scapegoating mechanism, which

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid. 18.

<sup>55</sup> René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1977).

enables him to reassess the meaning of rites, rituals, and myths. Included in that mechanism is the notion of the sacrificial crisis. A sacrificial crisis is a crisis in a community that can be resolved only by means of the sacrifice or expulsion of a surrogate victim or scapegoat. A sacrificial crisis entails the collapse of the social hierarchy and the loss of difference within the group. With the effacement of social distinctions the members of the community lose sight of who and what they are. In the chaos other distinctions are lost as well: good and evil, right and wrong, rationality and irrationality. In *Violence and the Sacred* Girard writes: ‘... coherent thinking collapses and rational activities are abandoned ... all values, spiritual and material, vanish.’<sup>56</sup> The crisis in the Catholic Church in many parts of the world as I write this paper, a crisis brought about by the sexual abuse of minors on the part of clergy, is an excellent example of a sacrificial crisis, and the scapegoating of homosexuals by the church in the wake of the crisis is clear evidence that the victimage mechanism is not yet dead. Ironically, the very bible on which church authorities claim their authority is founded exposed this victimage mechanism for what it is. Nothing could be more contrary to the gospel than the church’s official response, at least in some circles, to the crisis affecting its hierarchical system, a response that is resorted to in preference to reforming the system itself that is responsible for the abuses.

One of Girard’s interlocutors in *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World* maintains that Girard’s thesis is not primarily a theory of religion but a theory of human relations and of the role that the victimage mechanism plays in those relations, that the theory of religion is simply a particularly noteworthy aspect of a fundamental theory of mimetic relations, and that religion is one means of misinterpreting mimetic relations. Girard agrees. The sacred, he says, is to our understanding of human relations what phlogiston was to the understanding of combustion. And mimesis is to our understanding

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<sup>56</sup> Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* 91.

of human relations what oxygen is to the understanding of combustion. ‘Our own oxygen is mimesis and all that accompanies it.’ Such a statement may be primarily rhetorical, but its theoretical significance can be elevated if it is recognized, again, that Girard is working in and clarifying what Lonergan calls the first way of being conscious. The influence that distorted mimesis has on the realm of the sacred, which in its authenticity pertains primarily to the second way of being conscious, an influence that Girard elsewhere refers to as deviated transcendence, shows just how important this elevated theory of human relations, indeed of primordial intersubjectivity, is for theology. It helps us get straight just where the genuine *imago Dei*, and so the genuine *imitatio Dei*, lies in human consciousness and, even more, where it does not lie. To place it where it does not reside is precisely a matter of deviated transcendence.

### **5 *Imago Dei***

Where, then, does it lie? In particular, where is the *imago* that is also an *imitatio*? Foundationally, it lies in the created participation in active and passive spiration that is the share in divine life given to us here and now. That participation is (1) the gift of being in love in an unqualified fashion, which (2) alters the horizon in which evidence regarding one’s existential self-constitution is grasped, to ground a radical assent (3) from which there flows that radical yes to the value of such self-constitution that (4) grounds the habitual performance of loving acts.<sup>57</sup> The movements from evidence grasped to radical assent and then from evidence and assent together to proceeding love are instances of *emanationes intelligibiles* or autonomous spiritual processions. When these

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<sup>57</sup> 2009: Again, there is somewhat modified suggestion regarding these relations in

‘Sanctifying Grace, Charity, and the Divine Indwelling,’ which will be published in *Lonergan Workshop 22*, and uploaded on this site shortly thereafter.

are in the supernatural order, they are created participations in active and passive spiration, grounding an imitation of God in human interpersonal relations. The first three of these items constitute the created participation in active spiration, and the fourth the created participation in passive spiration.

It is, however, in the historical mission of the Word that we find concretely what it is to imitate the *Verbum spirans amorem* and the Father whose Word he is, that is, to imitate the two persons who *are* active spiration. And Girard illumines the concrete dynamics of what Lonergan articulates heuristically as follows, precisely in his discussion of the ‘appropriate willingness’ required to transcend the mystery of iniquity:

... the will can contribute to the solution of the problem of the social surd inasmuch as it adopts a dialectical attitude that parallels the dialectical method of intellect. The dialectical method of intellect consists in grasping that the social surd neither is intelligible nor is to be treated as intelligible. The corresponding dialectical attitude of will is to return good for evil. For it is only inasmuch as men are willing to meet evil with good, to love their enemies, to pray for those that persecute and calumniate them, that the social surd is a potential good. It follows that love of God above all and in all so embraces the order of the universe as to love all men with a self-sacrificing love.<sup>58</sup>

What Lonergan here is calling a dialectical attitude of will is expressly called by Jesus an imitation of the divine Father: ‘You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax

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58 Lonergan, *Insight* 721-22.

collectors do the same? And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.<sup>59</sup> At this point, it seems, our systematic considerations and the integration of these considerations with the mimetic theory of René Girard join in bearing witness to the biblical revelation's unmasking of the principal dynamics of evil in history and pointing the way to transcending these dynamics.

If this is the foundational instance of the *imago Dei*, the derived instance is the constant fidelity to the natural unfolding of the transcendental exigencies to be attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible, each with their own processions of act from act. This constant fidelity, as Lonergan emphasizes in *Insight*, requires the supernatural solution to the problem of evil, a supernatural solution that, in God's own dispensation, consists in the gift of created participations in the divine relations grounding imitations of the triune God.

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<sup>59</sup> Matthew 5:43-48.