

Essays in Systematic Theology 29: Preserving Lonergan's Understanding of Thomist Metaphysics: A Proposal and an Example¹

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1 A Proposal

In my presentation here last summer, I summarized the contents of four draft chapters of a book in progress entitled *The Trinity in History*.² (More accurately, it is a book that *was* in progress a year ago, but that has stalled in the past year.) The aim of the book is to set forth what for several years I have been calling the ‘unified field structure’ of a contemporary systematic theology. That unified field structure would consist of an integration of (1) the heuristic of history presented in *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, which itself builds on Lonergan’s philosophy and theology of history, with (2) the hypothesis found in chapter 6 of *The Triune God: Systematics* regarding the four divine relations and four created participations in and imitations of these relations – the so-called ‘four-point hypothesis.’ The four draft chapters that I summarized last summer were entitled ‘The Starting Point,’ ‘Initial Issues,’ ‘Mimesis,’ and ‘Sacralization and Desacralization.’ The latter two chapter titles indicate clearly that an engagement

1 This paper was presented at the Lonergan Workshop, Boston College, June 2008. It was published in *Lonergan Workshop* 21.

2 See Robert M. Doran, ‘Envisioning a Systematic Theology,’ *Lonergan Workshop* 20, ed. Fred Lawrence (Boston College, 2008) 105-26. See also Essay 22 in this e-book. 2011: The chapters referred to have subsequently been thoroughly rewritten and rearranged. The book is near completion.

with René Girard's mimetic theory will figure rather centrally in the book, and I will return to this point later in the current presentation.

Subsequently I have moved these four chapters back just a bit in the book, from being chapters 1 through 4 to being chapters 2 through 5, and have begun the book with a slightly revised form of a lecture that I delivered at Marquette University last October, 'Constructing a New Catholic Systematics: A Vision and an Invitation.' That lecture expanded on the introductory comments that were included in my presentation here last summer, and so I won't repeat here the principal points of the chapter.

In the course of the past year I have added two further draft chapters. Chapter 6 is entitled 'Autonomous Spiritual Processions: Lonergan's Early Analogy,' and chapter 7 is called 'Generation and Spiration.' But – and here is the problem – these two chapters are, in their present form, little more than an extended commentary on, respectively, the first two assertions in *The Triune God: Systematics*. There is very little original in these two chapters in their present form, and while I doubt that this present form is what I will eventually publish, the significance of the impasse that I have encountered is worth some reflection and comment, and in fact has given rise to much of what I want to say in the present paper.

We are asked at this year's Workshop to concentrate our attention on elements of Lonergan's work that we believe must be preserved. I wish to propose that the early Lonergan in general, and his appropriation of both Aristotle and Aquinas in particular, ranks high among the features of his work that cannot be left behind. In fact, I am proposing that we will succeed in moving Lonergan's project forward, in developing and implementing his work, in direct proportion to the extent to which we make our own his reaching up to the mind of Aquinas and his appropriation of the rest of his intellectual and spiritual heritage. Surely one of the

elements in his work that must be preserved as we move forward is his retrieval of the Thomist psychological analogy for the Trinitarian processions. In fact, I think it may be claimed that Lonergan gives us more than a retrieval; in my view he provides a definitive clarification of what Aquinas was about in questions 27 to 43 of the *prima pars* of the *Summa theologiae*, and he was able to do that because he had already provided in *Verbum* the detailed presentation of Thomist cognitional theory that Aquinas himself never did formulate in a single work.

So I have found myself immersed for a time in the so-called ‘early Lonergan,’ precisely in the interest of moving on, of developing and implementing. In my paper in Naples last month, I emphasized the abiding significance of chapter 18 of *Insight*, despite the development in Lonergan’s notion of the human good that had taken place by the time of *Method in Theology*.³ One of my arguments for the permanent value of chapter 18 was the close relationship between the unfolding of rational self-consciousness in that chapter and the dynamics of the psychological analogy as these are presented in *The Triune God: Systematics*, that is to say, in *Divinarum personarum* and more fully in *De Deo trino: Pars systematica*.⁴ But I am finding as I attempt to explore what I might be able to do in further work in systematics that more is at stake regarding the so-called ‘early Lonergan’ than incidental or hit-and-miss retrievals of immensely valuable materials composed

3 Robert M. Doran, ‘The Abiding Significance of the Ethics of *Insight*,’ to be published in the proceedings of the 2008 Lonergan conference in Naples, Italy. 2011: See Essay 27 in this e-book.

4 Now available as Bernard Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, trans. Michael G. Shields, ed. Robert M. Doran and H. Daniel Monsour, vol. 12 in Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

prior to the ‘hermeneutic turn’ in his thinking in the early 1960s: the turn to a philosophy of meaning, to an understanding of divine revelation in terms of meaning, to progress, decline, and redemption understood in terms of meaning, etc., etc. A doctoral student of mine in Toronto, Darren Dias, who just defended successfully a very fine dissertation, called this hermeneutic turn the shift from causality to meaning in the principal emphases of Lonergan’s thinking. But as Dias correctly insisted, the shift does not mean an abandonment of ‘causality,’ that is, of metaphysics, nor does it mean relegating to the dustbins of history the complex and sophisticated analyses of Aristotelian and Thomist texts that appear both in Lonergan’s published writings and in the notes that abide in his archives. Again, it does not mean that these analyses are valuable only for scholarship on Lonergan’s development, that is, for work in the first phase of theology involving interpretation and history, and that they have little or nothing to do with what remains permanently valid doctrinally or systematically in his thought.

With the present paper, then, I’d like to suggest we launch a mild campaign against any communal appropriation of Lonergan that would for all practical purposes simply replace theory with interiority rather than sublate theory by interiority. The tendency to the latter kind of appropriation presents a real danger, perhaps the single greatest danger, to the effective history, the *Wirkungsgeschichte*, of Lonergan’s work. In *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, I spoke several times of the possibility of an emerging post-interiority mentality at the level of common sense, a mentality analogous in our time to the post-systematic or post-theoretic mentality that Lonergan finds responsible for the achievements of the great Greek councils of the Church. I do not wish to make light of such a possible development, for I think it would hold immense potential for the renewal of culture and civilization in a world that quickly is losing both of these even in many of its institutions of so-called higher learning – institutions that are turning into little

more than expensive trade schools, whether the trade in question be civil and secular or ecclesiastical and ministerial. But the emergence of a post-interiority mentality in common sense would be a by-product of a far more profound development at the superstructural level of theory and specialization. That more profound development entails the sublation of theory by interiority. For one thing, the sublation of theory by interiority throws light back upon the meaning of what had previously been presented only theoretically. Think, for instance, of what an appropriation of the emergence of insight from image under the force of the desire to know and an appropriation also of the difference between that emergence and the emanation of an inner word from insight itself could do for the metaphysical appreciation of the meaning of potency and act. For the former – insight from image in a questioning mind – is the emergence of act from potency, while the latter – inner word from insight – is the emergence of act from act. Could there be a clearer instance of the meaning of these Scholastic terms than the one that emerges from interiorly differentiated consciousness? Might this become our primary source of data as we explore and teach at the level of our own time the meaning of Aristotelian and Thomist metaphysics? But I also call to mind that it is by reading chapter 3 of *Verbum* and the later development in the Trinitarian systematics of the metaphysics of knowledge contained in *Verbum*, even more than by reading *Insight*, that one will be able to appropriate the difference between these two processions. *Insight* gives one the emergence of the act of understanding from appropriate constellations of images under the force of the desire to know; but it is not as explicit on the emergence of the inner word from insight as is *Verbum*, and it does not present either of these processions in terms of potency and act with the same precision that the distinction of *processio operationis* and *processio operati*

has provided, first in *Verbum* and then in *De Deo trino: Pars systematica*.⁵ It is this precision that I am arguing needs to be preserved, and I'm afraid of the possible loss of what it has to offer if we settle for a purely commonsense, descriptive interiority that, while it certainly helps everyday living, cannot suffice to address the major human-scientific, philosophical, and theological issues of our time.

If the appropriate model for thinking of Lonergan's significance has something to do with what he called the *third* stage of meaning, it would violate that intention to resort to a sophisticated commonsense, descriptive presentation of interiority rather than to appropriate and develop (as Lonergan clearly wanted done) the post-theoretical presentation that is his real legacy, where by 'post-theoretical' is meant not the abandonment of theory by interiority but the sublation of theory by interiority. Lonergan is heading toward and making possible a new language, a language that he admits is only inchoate even in his own work; but that new language has to involve a transposition of the heritage that entered into his efforts, and not an abandonment of portions of his integral development as if these were only relics of another era that he had to spend some of his time abiding in even against his own will because of the conditions under which he was forced to teach in pre-Vatican II pontifical faculties of Catholic theology. Lonergan was entirely at home in the best of the Scholastic heritage, more so than any other thinker I have encountered. His effort to move beyond it would be incorrectly interpreted as a repudiation. And we will continue to move to the creation of a new

⁵ See Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, vol. 2 in Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), chapter 3 *passim*, and Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics* 124-69.

language, I am proposing, in direct proportion to our assimilation and appropriation of the entire cultural, religious, philosophical, and theological heritage that made Lonergan the great figure that he was.

On the other hand, I'm not arguing simply for a return to the Scholastic framework or the Scholastic language. *Insight* and the psychological analogy as presented in *The Triune God: Systematics* both provide us with sufficient materials to retain in the philosophy and theology of the future, in the third stage of meaning, such terms as ‘potency,’ ‘form,’ and ‘act,’ which ‘come alive,’ as it were, in chapter 15 of *Insight*, but a good deal of the other Scholastic language is going to have to be transposed into a new key. Some of this Lonergan has done: ‘agent intellect’ becomes the pure, disinterested, unrestricted desire to know, for example; one instance of ‘passive potency’ and ‘active potency’ becomes, respectively, sublated and sublating operations in intentional consciousness;⁶ ‘sanctifying grace’ becomes the dynamic state of being in love without restrictions or conditions or qualifications or reservations.⁷ Even so, in one of his most honest and forthright admissions of the stark incompleteness of what he had only begun to accomplish, Lonergan states quite forthrightly that we do not yet have the appropriate language for articulating ‘the emerging religious consciousness of our time.’ ‘There cannot be expected any synthesis,’ he wrote, ‘for the contributions are as yet not available.

⁶ More precisely, ‘... the active potencies are the transcendental notions revealed in questions for intelligence, questions for reflection, questions for deliberation. The passive potencies are the lower levels as presupposed and complemented by the higher.’ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (latest printing, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007) 120.

⁷ 2011: As I have indicated in several other entries in this e-book, I prefer to identify charity, not sanctifying grace, with this dynamic state of being in love.

At most there is possible a set of suggestions that might facilitate reflections,' a set of suggestions that can do no better than rely on the best of the language that *is* available to us from our own tradition as 'a temporary or momentary convention.'⁸ So I am suggesting the need for a balance between a retrieval of the best of the theoretical heritage of Catholic philosophy and theology and the anticipation of the radical transpositions and developments that will be demanded as we move into the future. The two were intimately related in Lonergan's own development. *Vetera novis augere et perficere* was anything but a slogan for Lonergan. It can legitimately be claimed, I believe, that he accepted this papal injunction as defining his own vocation, and that in his own mind the work of developing and completing the positional work in his own heritage was intimately connected to the work of identifying and understanding what that work was in its own right, in its own context, and in its own language.

The mention of 'slogans' brings me to a related point. In a casual conversation that I had with Joseph Komonchak when Joe came to Marquette this year to present the Père Marquette Lecture, he spoke about the frequent impression one gets of 'boilerplating' in Lonergan's own writing of *Method in Theology*. That expression summarized better for me than anything else the impression that I have had for some time that *Method* is the work of a tired man who simply wanted to finish the book that was his life's work. But nobody could legitimately describe *Insight* as 'boilerplating.' And I think that we have to avoid similar traps, similar easy ways out, that in our case can't be justified in terms of fatigue but would be better described as symptoms of laziness. Even the constant repetition of the

⁸ Bernard Lonergan, 'Prolegomena to the Study of the Emerging Religious Consciousness of Our Time,' in *A Third Collection*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985) 55, 70.

transcendental precepts, while it no doubt has its value, if it functions as a substitute for careful explanatory disengagement of sublated and sublating operations, is taking an easy way out that in the long run will not be very helpful to anyone. The rigorous phenomenology of judgment, for example, that is, of being reasonable, has barely been begun. A more or less universally agreed-upon phenomenology of fourth-level operations and states has not yet been reached in the Lonergan community. And the lacuna is particularly clear with respect to the first transcendental precept, ‘Be attentive.’ Thirty years ago, Lonergan told me that I had to read a book by Manfred Clynes entitled *Sentics*.⁹ He described it to me as brilliant and told me he thought the author was a genius. The book begins an attempt to disengage what in fact are conjugate intelligibilities at the level of the flow of sensitive consciousness, what I would like to call ‘sentic forms.’ Despite the fact that my own work on psychic conversion was moving in this area, I failed to take up Lonergan’s suggestion until this past year, when I was put on to Clynes’s work again by Greg Lauzon, who is attempting to move on from his wonderful lecture here last year on emergent probability and the operators of musical evolution¹⁰ and who is using Clynes to help him do so. We can be content at one level to articulate in summary fashion the transcendental precepts. There is a

9 Dr. Manfred Clynes, *Sentics: The Touch of the Emotions* (New York: Doubleday, 1977; a revised edition appeared in 1989 from New York: Avery Publishing Group).

10 Greg Lauzon, ‘Emerging Probabilities and the Operators of Musical Evolution,’ *Lonergan Workshop* 20, ed. Fred Lawrence (Boston College, 2008) 185-96. 2011: A revised version appears in *Meaning and History in Systematic Theology: Essays in Honor of Robert M. Doran, S.J.*, ed. John D. Dadosky (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2009) 254-55.

value to doing so. But if we do little or nothing more than that, we are not moving into a new stage of meaning but reverting to a purely commonsense appropriation of interiority.

Again, a somewhat different instance of what analogously would be the same point can be drawn from a reflection on Lonergan's Ignatian heritage. I have argued that a mutual self-mediation between Lonergan and Ignatius is possible if one interprets Lonergan's two accounts of decision – chapter 18 of *Insight* and chapter 2 of *Method in Theology* – in terms of Ignatius's 'times of election' and, conversely, if one understands what Ignatius is talking about with the help of Lonergan's more detailed and explanatory exploration of conscious intentionality.¹¹ But that mutual self-mediation would also be or bring about an advance on the appropriation of the Ignatian heritage. While this claim might meet with disfavor from those people whom my friend, iconographer William Hart McNichols, calls the 'Ignatius police,' still I want to put it forward. None other than Roland Barthes concludes an extraordinary essay on the *Spiritual Exercises* with the observation – and the observation is correct concerning some experiences of the *Exercises* and some directors of the *Exercises* – that Ignatius's work both 'establishes a psychotherapy designed to awaken, to make resonate, through the production of a fantasmatic language, the dullness of this body which has nothing to say,' and also 'provokes a neurosis whose very obsession protects the submission of the retreatant (or Christian) with regard to [a particular understanding of] the Divinity.' Again, writes Barthes, 'Ignatius (and the Church

11 See Robert M. Doran, 'Ignatian Themes in the Thought of Bernard Lonergan: Revisiting a Topic that Deserves Further Reflection,' *Lonergan Workshop 19*, ed. Fred Lawrence (Boston College, 2007) 83-106. 2011: See Essays 19 and 20 in this e-book.

with him) sets up a psychotherapy for the exercitant, but constantly refuses to resolve the transferential relationship that it implies.¹² This is true of some experiences of the *Exercises*, and it may be only by moving beyond the explicit text of Ignatius that we will be able to avoid the danger of an obsessional neurosis. The best directors of the *Exercises* have sublated the text into a spirituality that has advanced beyond the sixteenth century. And that moving beyond the text may in fact take the form of a mutual self-mediation of Ignatius with Lonergan. Barthes contrasts the situation of the unfree version of the *Exercises* with ‘another type of asceticism, Zen for example, whose entire effort is on the contrary to “de-obsessionalize” meditation by subverting, in order better to supersede them, classes, lists, enumerations – in short, articulation, or even: language itself.’¹³ Was Lonergan drawn to the work of fellow Jesuit William Johnston, I have to ask, because that work was moving in a direction that would allow Zen to heal Ignatius even while Ignatius provided a context for appropriating Zen? It is entirely possible. But my present point is that a new language is required to answer these questions, a language found neither in Ignatius nor in Zen and only inchoately in Lonergan, but also that this new language emerges not from nothing but from the ongoing transposition – which is likely to take centuries – of the language and the terms of meaning that influenced Lonergan to advance to a new stage of meaning that sublates what went before.

In summary, then, I’m proposing

- (1) that the immense potential in Lonergan’s work for the integration and reorientation of the sciences and of common sense will not be realized until we

12 Roland Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976) 71.

13 Ibid.

acknowledge that the task of integration and reorientation is the task of metaphysics as Lonergan conceives the latter, the task of the explicit conception, affirmation, and implementation of proportionate being,

(2) that making that metaphysics our own, that is, conceiving and affirming the integral heuristic structure of proportionate being, entails following Lonergan through his detailed reading of Aristotle and Aquinas as well as through the transpositions of their thought that he made in the context of his awareness of modern science, and

(3) that implementing the integral heuristic structure in all the areas envisioned by Lonergan and in the work of developing a new language even for interreligious understanding will succeed in direct proportion to our success in conceiving and affirming the heritage that was his and that is also our own.

2 An Example

I have time to present only one example of what I am talking about, and it is an example that formed the third part of my paper in Naples on the importance of chapter 18 of *Insight*. Unless I'm profoundly mistaken, it would be an example of *implementing* something of the integral heuristic structure of proportionate being.

The example has to do with the possible appropriation of Girardian mimetic theory by Lonergan's intentionality analysis or, better, by the interiorly differentiated consciousness that emerges in part from that analysis.

In the Naples paper I offered three arguments for the abiding significance of the approach to the good, to decision, to ethics reflected in chapter 18 of *Insight*. The first had to do with a point that is familiar to a number of you from a previous paper that I gave at the Workshop on Ignatian elements in Lonergan's thinking, namely, the proposal that chapter 18 of *Insight* provides in philosophic terms

something like the pure form of Ignatius's so-called 'third time of election.'¹⁴ The second proposed that the psychological analogy contained in *De Deo trino* relies on the same appropriation of rational self-consciousness as that facilitated by chapter 18, with the single addition that once (and only once) in *De Deo trino* the judgment entailed in the process is called a judgment of value, something that to my initial great surprise was not the case in *Insight*. The third is that what in *Insight* is called rational self-consciousness in *De Deo trino* is called existential autonomy, and that the notion of existential autonomy as understood by Lonergan provides perhaps the principal key to the integration of Girardian thought with Lonergan's interiority analysis. It is this third point that I would now like to use to exemplify and, I hope, bolster the principal point that I'm trying to make in this paper, namely, that implementing the integral heuristic structure of proportionate being in direct conversation with contemporary trends is directly proportionate to conceiving and affirming that structure in indirect conversation with the best in the philosophical and theological heritage that formed Lonergan's own mentality.¹⁵

I begin with a statement of psychiatrist Jean-Michel Oughourlian, in the dialogical encounter with René Girard published as *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*: '... the real human *subject* can only come out of the rule

14 See note 11 above.

15 This section repeats as well some elements from the paper I presented this April at the West Coast Methods Institute at Loyola Marymount University, entitled 'Spontaneity, Autonomy, and Cultural Critique: A Meeting Point for Lonergan and Girard.' 2011: See Essay 28 in this e-book.

of the Kingdom; apart from this rule, there is never anything but mimetism and the “interindividual.” Until this happens, the only subject is the mimetic structure.¹⁶

While the statement is excessive, it does contain a position, and my effort is to advance the position. The phrase ‘the mimetic structure’ refers to what is disclosed in the account of acquisitive desire that Girard has been presenting for several decades, in various works of literary criticism, anthropology, psychology, and theological reflection. Very briefly, many of our desires are neither as spontaneous nor as autonomous as we like to believe, but originate rather in the desire of another whom we take as a model or mediator of our own desire. When the desire is acquisitive, that is, when I want what you have or want because you have or want it, where ‘because’ signifies a sensitive mechanism, not a rational decision, the other becomes the rival, and attention is gradually removed from the object of the respective desires to focus more or less exclusively on the rivalry between the model and the imitator. Acquisitive mimesis has become conflictual mimesis, and conflictual mimesis is contagious within a community, leading eventually, if it is allowed to fester and grow, to the selection of a more or less arbitrary victim or scapegoat, whose immolation, exclusion, or marginalization from the community restores peace at least temporarily and avoids the danger of escalating violence in the community. In other words, the phrase ‘the mimetic structure’ summarizes basic elements in Girard’s mimetic theory. I am interested in Girard first because I think there is something profoundly on target for our authenticity in much of what he says. But I am interested in him also in my capacity as a systematic theologian, because there are theological issues to which

16 Jean-Michel Oughourlian, in René Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987) 199, emphasis in the text. Girard’s response (*ibid.*): ‘That is quite right.’

he can make a great contribution, especially in the areas of revelation, original sin, and redemption. But his work needs to be integrated with that of Lonergan, and this task has occupied a good deal of my attention over the past couple of years.

Now, one possible initial heuristic structure for integrating the respective studies of human desire composed by Lonergan and Girard may be derived by expanding upon something that Lonergan writes in *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.’¹⁷

The first way of being conscious is sensitive or psychic; the second is intelligent, reasonable, and responsible. Both ways of being conscious are also ways of desiring. The first entails a preponderance of ‘undergoing,’ while the second, though it surely involves passivity – ‘intelligere est quoddam pati,’ Lonergan repeats from Aquinas¹⁸ – stresses as well, and indeed highlights, the self-governed and self-possessed unfolding of operations that is indicated by Lonergan’s repetition of the phrase ‘in order to ...’ The first way appears more spontaneous, though if the ‘undergoing’ is interindividual this may be an illusion. The second shows greater autonomy, but only if it manifests what Oughourlian

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

18 Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas* 142, quoting Thomas Aquinas, *Super I Sententiarum*, d. 8, q. 3, a. 2 sol., who himself is quoting Aristotle, *De anima*, III, 4, 4292 13-15.

calls ‘the real human subject,’ the subject that has transcended the influence of the negative mimetic, however precariously. For the two ways of being conscious interact, and the relative autonomy of the second way may be compromised by the gradual infiltration of mimetic desire into the performance of spiritual operations. A clear instance of how this may happen may be illustrated by expanding on a comment in Max Scheler’s essay on *ressentiment*, an essay which may justly be interpreted, I believe, as foreshadowing Girard’s work, in that Girard adds the crucial piece regarding mimesis. Scheler writes,

Beyond all conscious lying and falsifying, there is a deeper ‘organic mendacity.’ Here the falsification is not formed in consciousness but at the same stage of the mental process as the impressions and value feelings themselves: *on the road* of experience into consciousness. There is ‘organic mendacity’ whenever a man’s mind admits only those impressions and feelings which serve his ‘interest’ or his instinctive attitude. Already in the process of mental reproduction and recollection, the contents of his experience are modified in this direction. He who is ‘mendacious’ has no need to lie! In his case, the automatic process of forming recollections, impressions, and feelings is involuntarily slanted, so that conscious falsification becomes unnecessary.¹⁹

The expansion on this comment that I have in mind would stress that the very processes of act from act at the levels of intelligence, reason, and decision – the emergence of a word from insight, the emanation of a judgment from reflective grasp of the virtually unconditioned, the procession of a decision from the preceding acts – have already been derailed by an earlier distortion that reaches

19 Max Scheler, *Ressentiment*, trans. William W. Holdheim (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1961) 77-78.

into the organic interindividuality of the less than ‘real human subject’ and occasions a deviation in the emergence of act from the potentiality of underlying manifolds all along the line, including the emergence of images from the neural manifold. The distortion of the emergence of act from potency gives rise to a distortion also in the emergence of act from act.²⁰

The first way of being conscious and of desiring is more (though not exclusively) characterized by the emergence of act from potency, and the second more (though not exclusively) by the emergence of act from act, by *emanatio intelligibilis*, intelligible emanation or what I prefer to call autonomous spiritual procession. Girard specializes in clarifying the first of these ways of being conscious, emphasizing its intersubjective or ‘interindividual’ character, while Lonergan has explored the second perhaps more acutely and more thoroughly (to say nothing of more accurately) than any other thinker.

Precisely because of the interplay between these two dimensions of interiority and desire, Girard regards as illusory most of our attempts to describe our acts, including our intentional operations, as either spontaneous or autonomous. In the first book-length presentation of his theory of mimetic desire, *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque*, translated into English as *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*, he speaks of the illusion that our desires are spontaneous inclinations toward attractive objects.²¹ But the same illusion is spoken of there as the ‘illusion of autonomy.’²² As an illusion of spontaneity, the desire is imagined to

20 Questions raised by Fred Lawrence following my presentation in Naples prompted this articulation, which needs further development.

21 René Girard, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1976) 12.

22 Ibid. 16.

be ‘deeply rooted in the object and in this object alone.’²³ As an illusion of autonomy, it is thought to be ‘rooted in the subject.’ In fact the two delineations of the illusion cover over the same fact, namely, that the desire has been mediated by another and is contaminated by mimetic contagion.

In the paper that I delivered at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles this April, I proposed some considerations to enable us to make our way through these complex relations. I will repeat these suggestions here in summary fashion.

Lonergan speaks of the need for a fourfold differentiation of consciousness if we are to replace classicism with an acceptable *Weltanschauung* for our time, a differentiation in which ‘the workings of common sense, science, scholarship, intentionality analysis, and the life of prayer have been integrated.’²⁴ But as I have attempted to argue from the beginning of my own work, ‘intentionality analysis’ is one dimension of ‘interiority analysis,’ but not the only one. There is also the sensitive-psychological dimension, the conjugate intelligibilities that, if Girard is correct, reside largely or at least partly in the intersubjective roots of Lonergan’s first ‘way of being conscious.’ But in this context the word ‘autonomy’ can take on an added significance, beyond the salutary hermeneutic of suspicion that Girard exercises with regard to our illusions. There is a discussion of existential autonomy that appears in Lonergan’s presentation of his analogy for the Trinitarian

23 Ibid. 12.

24 Bernard Lonergan, ‘Doctrinal Pluralism,’ in *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980*, vol. 17 in Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, ed. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004) 85-86.

processions, and it is rooted in the rational exigence for self-consistency between knowing and doing that constitutes the notion of value in the ethics of *Insight*.

Lonergan reaches a clear specification of the proper Trinitarian analogy through a series of disjunctions. The disjunctions, he says, will provide a set of criteria by which we may discern whether any given analogy is appropriate or not. The first six of these disjunctions may be treated very briefly.

In the first disjunction Lonergan establishes that we must move from the appropriation of some concrete mode of procession in human consciousness, rather than from an abstract definition of procession; in the second that any knowledge of divine procession must be analogical; in the third that the analogy must be systematic, that is, capable of resolving every other theoretical question in Trinitarian theology; in the fourth that the analogy must be from what is naturally known; the fifth establishes that it must be from a specific nature, not from metaphysical common notions as in natural theology; and the sixth that that nature must be spiritual.

While these first six disjunctions themselves contain elements of Lonergan's appropriation of the Aristotelian-Thomist tradition, and so while, in the light of what I am trying to convey here, they should not be taken lightly, it is particularly the next three disjunctions that help me to emphasize my point. The seventh disjunction brings us closer to the notion of autonomy. The seventh disjunction is between those spiritual processions in which act proceeds from potency and those in which act proceeds from act. Since in God there is only act, only the latter processions in human consciousness will provide an appropriate analogy. 'The analogy ... must be selected from the conscious originating of a real, natural, and conscious act, from a real, natural, and conscious act, within intellectual

consciousness itself and by virtue of intellectual consciousness itself.²⁵ Such are the procession of conceptual syntheses from direct understanding, the procession of judgments of fact and of value from the grasp of sufficient grounds, and the procession of decisions from reflective grasp and the inner word of judgment that follows upon it.

The eighth disjunction is between an *appropriation* of the dynamics of intellectual consciousness and a more distant metaphysical statement of cognitional fact. Only appropriation can enable us to distinguish the autonomous intellectual procession of act from act under the power of transcendental laws from the spontaneous intellectual procession of act from potency and from the spontaneous sensitive processions of act from both potency and act in accord with the laws specific to continuations of prehuman processes such as those manifested in primordial human intersubjectivity. Note, though, that the appropriation itself relies on the more distant metaphysical statement. Note, too, that Lonergan has here introduced his own meaning for the words ‘spontaneous’ and ‘autonomous.’ By ‘autonomous intellectual procession of act from act’ he is referring to a consciousness that is under rule or law only inasmuch as it is constituted by its own transcendental desire, to which there are attached what he came to call the transcendental precepts. But by fidelity to these precepts such a consciousness ‘rules itself inasmuch as under God’s agency it determines itself to its own acts in accordance with the exigencies’ of intelligence, rationality, and existential responsibility.²⁶

This, I propose, is the autonomy of what Oughourlian called the ‘real human subject.’ It does proceed from an intellectual spontaneity, namely, the conscious

25 Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics* 175.

26 Ibid.

transcendental notion of being that is the native desire to know and the conscious transcendental notion of value that extends that native desire by force of a further question, a question in the existential order. But that spontaneity becomes preceptive, and this is what converts the spontaneity into a genuine autonomy: not only *do* we raise questions, we must raise them; not only *do* we doubt, we must doubt; not only *do* we deliberate, we must deliberate. We must raise questions lest we pass judgment on what we do not understand; we must raise doubts lest we adhere to a false appearance of truth; we must deliberate lest we rush headlong to our own destruction.²⁷ And it is in fidelity to the *must*, to the exigency into which the spontaneity has been transformed, that there emerges the only genuine autonomy of which the human subject is capable. That autonomy governs only some of the processions that occur in intelligent, rational, responsible consciousness, those processions in which act proceeds not from potency but from act. Such is the case with the autonomy of freedom whenever we choose *because* we ourselves judge and *because* our choice is in accordance with our judgment; such is the case with the autonomy of rationality whenever we judge *because* we grasp the evidence and *because* our judgment is in accord with the grasped evidence; such is the case with the autonomy of clarity whenever we define *because* we grasp the intelligible in the sensible and *because* our definition is in accord with grasped intelligibility.²⁸ And it is only in the procession of act from act, and not in the procession of act from potency as in the emergence of insight from questions, that the proper analogy is found for understanding, however remotely, the Trinitarian processions: ‘as is the case when a word arises by virtue of consciousness as determined by the act of understanding, and a choice arises by

27 Ibid. 177.

28 See ibid., emphasis added.

virtue of consciousness as determined by the act of judgment (that is, by a compound word).²⁹

The ninth disjunction, the most important, is tripartite, for such autonomy can be manifested in the realm of practical intelligence and rationality, in the realm of speculative intelligence and rationality, and in the realm of existential self-determination through rational judgment and responsible choice. ‘When one asks about the triune God,’ Lonergan writes, ‘one is not considering God as creator or as agent, and so one is prescinding from practical autonomy. Nor is one considering God insofar as God understands and judges and loves all things, and so one is prescinding from speculative matters. But one is considering God inasmuch as God is in himself eternally constituted as triune, and so one takes one’s analogy from the processions that are in accordance with the exercise of existential autonomy,’ the autonomy in which one decides to operate in accord with the norms inherent in the unfolding of attentiveness, intelligence, rationality, and moral responsibility.³⁰ That alone is the genuine autonomy of the ‘real human subject,’ and while it is an autonomy that has transcended the mimetic structure of the interindividual and thus emerged into genuine subjectivity, it has not transcended every form of subordination or of imitation. Rather, ‘the autonomy of human consciousness is indeed subordinate, not to every object whatsoever [and, we must add in a Girardian context, not to every mimetic structure whatsoever], but to the infinite subject in whose image it has been made and whom it is bound to imitate.’³¹ Even more precisely, of course, we must emphasize that the autonomy of human consciousness has been made in the image and likeness not of one but of

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid. 179.

31 Ibid. 215.

three infinite subjects of the one divine consciousness, and its genuine autonomy consists precisely in its fidelity to that image, issuing a word *because* it has understood something and moving to loving decision *because* that decision is in accord with the true value judgment that is its *verbum spirans amorem*. In such fidelity there *is* imitation, mimesis, but it is the imitation built into the image of the triune God, the imitation of the divine relations themselves. The so-called four-point hypothesis would emphasize such an imitation in the supernatural order, but Lonergan's original psychological analogy insists that such an imitation is constitutive of human nature.

I concluded my Naples paper with the claim that in the final analysis, the abiding significance of the ethics of *Insight* is found in the fact that it is a clear articulation of precisely what constitutes the imitation of the Trinitarian relations that constitute us even in our human nature as images of God. In dialogue with Girard, it may be stated that by fidelity to the transcendental precepts, we move from mimetic contagion to an imitation of God that converts the deviated transcendence of mimetic rivalry and its false religion into the genuine transcendence of being in love with God. But in the context of the present paper, I wish to add that Lonergan's appropriation of the difference between *processio operationis* and *processio operati*, between the emergence in intentional consciousness of act from potency and the emergence of act from act, and so his sophisticated retrieval of the permanent achievements of Thomist metaphysics, alone made possible the contribution that his analysis now is capable of making to implementing the same integral heuristic structure that, before implementing it, he conceived and affirmed with a fullness that is perhaps unparalleled on the contemporary scene. With that intimate joining of appropriating the *vetera* and addressing the *nova*, he has left us a permanent example that we must follow if we wish to develop and implement his achievements.