

## **Essays in Systematic Theology 4: Lonergan and Balthasar: Methodological Considerations<sup>1</sup>**

Bernard Lonergan and Hans Urs von Balthasar are probably both guaranteed a lasting place in the history of Roman Catholic theology. Some might go so far as to wager with me that they will prove to be the two most influential Catholic theologians of the twentieth century. In this paper I wish to bring these two theologians into contact with one another. I believe there is a certain urgency to the task of integrating what they stand for and represent, and of allowing them to complement and, where necessary, even correct one another. If we cannot achieve this sort of integration, we may well find ourselves engaged in something similar to the Aristotelian-Augustinian disputes in the Middle Ages. These disputes, of course, occurred despite the fact that Thomas Aquinas went a long way in integrating the Aristotelian and Augustinian influences on his own thought and left that integration as a permanent legacy to theology.<sup>2</sup> An effort at the kind of reconciliation I envision has no guarantee of warding off the theological infighting that I would forestall. Perhaps the church, and theology within the church, are already so immersed in such disputes that we cannot head them off. But an effort can be made at the kind of basic clarification that could at least give us pause before we risk some of the more disastrous consequences.

I will suggest here that the horizons of Lonergan and Balthasar do not differ in a dialectical fashion, but rather are related in a way that at times provides mutual

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2 For one instance of this integration, see Lonergan's 'Introduction: Subject and Soul' in Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, vol. 2 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

complementarity and at times reflects genetic relations that go both ways, with Lonergan sometimes offering an advance on Balthasar, and Balthasar at other times offering an advance on Lonergan.<sup>3</sup> I will indicate some of the reasons for such a conviction.

Balthasar has been compared to Bonaventure, and I recently heard that, when apprised of this comparison, he said that it would make him very happy if it is accurate. Many of us have heard Lonergan compared to Aquinas, and we know that he spent eleven of the best years of his life (1938-1949) in apprenticeship to Aquinas before setting out on his own, responding in both periods to Pope Leo XIII's call to theologians in *Aeterni Patris*: 'vetera novis augere et perficere.' As I would hope that for the most part we can posit complementary and genetic, not dialectical, relations between Bonaventure and Aquinas, so I would hope that we might find similar mutually helpful relations between these two twentieth-century theological giants. The reconciliation of what these respective traditions represent is the key motivation behind this study. This reconciliation is particularly important at the present time both in theology and in church polity.

This paper is but a beginning. It lists *some* of the methodological questions that would have to be faced by theologians who would take the work of both Lonergan and Balthasar as formative of their own theological options. For the most part it suggests only tentative, hypothetical answers to such questions. I am more familiar with Lonergan than with Balthasar and am committed to Lonergan's vision of theology's structure and method. One of my concerns is to argue that Lonergan is not subject to Balthasar's criticisms of 'transcendental method.' But I also find Balthasar's work important within the very methodological framework that I have opted for, since this work appeals to the

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3 On complementary, genetic, and dialectical relations among horizons, see Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (latest printing, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006) (236-37).

same aesthetic-dramatic complement that for some twenty years,<sup>4</sup> relying on the notion of ‘psychic conversion,’ I have attempted to bring to Lonergan’s method and foundations. Each of these great theologians has something to offer to the other, and the present paper begins to explore their mutual complementarity.<sup>5</sup>

There is one further formative influence on the theological program that I envision. It comes from no one single theologian, but from the effective history of liberation theology as that effective history has already been made part of the church’s teaching, if not always of its practice. This influence can be mentioned only in passing, since here we are about something distinct. But it must at least be mentioned, since I think it is central to the task and responsibility of a Catholic theology that would build on at least some of the lasting achievements of the twentieth century. Moreover, it may be in attempts to meet the issues raised by liberation concerns that, however surprising it may seem, a reconciliation of Lonergan and Balthasar may occur.

## **1 The Situation, Categories, and the Method of Correlation**

### *1.1 The Situation and Systematic Theology*

One of the central methodological questions that arises in an attempt to bridge these two ways of doing theology has to do with the role of ‘the situation’ as a theological source, and with the appropriate use of theological categories in mediating between the situation and the role of Christian faith in that situation. The first step toward attempting to bring

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4 2009: Now more than thirty years.

5 2009 note: I would now speak of the mutual self-mediation of their respective theologies, rather than their mutual complementarity; on mutual self-mediation, see below, note 15.

the theologies of Lonergan and Balthasar into dialogue with one another occurred for me when I recognized that neither of them employs or recommends a method of correlation in facing this question.

I would summarize as follows what I want to say in this section: (1) a systematic theology must employ both ‘general’ categories, shared with other disciplines, and ‘special’ categories proper to theology;<sup>6</sup> (2) both sets of categories are to be employed in explaining both the situation and the contributions of Christian faith; (3) this employment of the categories is not adequately summarized in terms of a method of correlation; (4) in both sets of categories, general and special, there will be elements derived from previous achievements and new elements generated in the task of theological construction; (5) the basic question has to do with the ground on which one appropriates past achievements and from which one derives new categories, whether general or special; and (6) while Lonergan illuminates principally the ground of general categories, Balthasar may in the long run be more helpful in illuminating the ground of special categories.

Systematic theology, then, always addresses a particular situation and attempts to catalyze an alternative situation that more closely approximates the reign of God in human affairs. In this sense systematic theology is a form of praxis, the praxis of meaning. While it would attempt to understand the meanings constitutive of Christian existence, and especially the meanings expressed in ecclesial and theological doctrines, such understanding is never just an end in itself, at least not absolutely so. It heads toward the vast multidisciplinary, crosscultural, interreligious, and pastoral-theological work that Lonergan sums up under the rubric of ‘communications,’ where theology

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6 On the categories, see Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 281-93. Lonergan emphasizes, of course, that both sets of categories are employed not only in systematics but in all eight of what he calls the functional specialties.

assists the church in its ongoing process of self-constitution.<sup>7</sup> Theology in the twentieth century has become, it may be argued, more aware of the way in which contexts inevitably shape even the most systematic endeavors; the situations out of which the efforts themselves arise and which they would attempt to address, and the visions that theologians have of what an alternative situation might be, are formative of constructive systematic theology. In Lonergan's words, 'Questions for systematics can arise from communications.'<sup>8</sup>

This does not mean, of course, that systematic theology can ever be merely contextual. So-called 'contextual theology' is what Lonergan called, not systematics but communications, and, as he pithily observed, without work in the first seven functional specialties – research, interpretation, history, dialectic, foundations, doctrines, and systematics – a theologian has nothing to communicate.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, every theological effort, no matter how systematic and even transcultural it be, is situated, finite, and hermeneutical. A systematic theology always at least implicitly addresses one situation, however global that situation may be, and, as a ministry of the church, evokes an alternative situation that more closely approximates the reign of God in human affairs.

It is not sufficient, however, for a theologian simply to list characteristics of the situation that he or she may be concerned about. Any new full-scale systematic work in theology today, it is true, begins after the century of Auschwitz and Hiroshima, of the Gulag and Bosnia, of the Cultural Revolution and the killing fields of Cambodia, of nuclear terror, genetic engineering, and AIDS, of increasingly open access to abortion and euthanasia, and of the idolatry of global free-market economics, the century of what

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7 Ibid. chapter 14.

8 Ibid. 142.

9 Ibid. 355.

Edith Wyschogrod has called the death event<sup>10</sup> and Pope John Paul II the culture of death. And it begins after the events of 11 September 2001.<sup>11</sup> But this list of events and trends is preliminary even to an adequate *description* of the situation which a contemporary systematics would address; it does not begin to approach an *explanation* of that situation, and explanation is what systematic theology is about and ultimately what communications must rely on.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, I must be content for now to say that it is in such a context as the one just summarily catalogued that my effort at reconciling two major theologians takes place. For it is in some such context that a contemporary systematics must attempt to offer a coherent statement of the meanings constitutive of good and holy persons and of alternative communities gifted with that participation in divine life that Christians call the gift of the Holy Spirit. A systematic statement of that gift is a statement that would evoke the integrity that fidelity to the gift makes possible.

Around that gift the special categories of a contemporary systematics must be organized. The gift itself is the mission of the Holy Spirit, the eternal procession of the third Person in the Godhead joined to the created external term that traditionally has been called sanctifying grace. That external term is the created communication of God's own

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10 Edith Wyschogrod, *Spirit in Ashes: Hegel, Heidegger, and Man-made Mass Death* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985).

11 2009 note: The last sentence obviously did not appear in the original publication of this paper in 1997.

12 In a previous work I attempted to spell out in some detail a heuristic structure that theologians might use to explain 'situations,' including the situation that embraces the events that here have been simply listed. See Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990, 2001). One implication of that work is that systematic theology itself will today take the form of a theology of history.

life; it grounds our participation, including our conscious participation, in Trinitarian life especially through charity, but also through hope, faith, various charisms, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.<sup>13</sup> God happens even in such a history as that just summarized.

Systematic theology must be permeated by a concern to understand how that can be true, to understand that occurrence as best we can, and to understand the rest of Christian truth, the constitutive meanings of Christian existence expressed in doctrines, in the light of this more radical understanding of our being gifted with a created share in the inner life of the triune God. Its effort must be to understand that occurrence with an eye to the very situation that we are addressing, and so with a view to communications. The situation

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13 The position expressed here on the relation between sanctifying grace and the mission of the Holy Spirit is based on Bernard Lonergan, *De Deo trino*, vol. 2: *Pars systematica*, chapter 6 (on the divine missions), with elements taken as well from thesis 1 of Lonergan's earlier (1946) 'De ente supernaturali.' The first of these works is now available as *The Triune God: Systematics*, vol. 12 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, trans. Michael G. Shields, ed. Robert M. Doran and H. Daniel Monsour (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007). 'De ente supernaturali' will appear with a translation by Michael Shields in vol. 19 of Lonergan's *Collected Works, Early Latin Theology*, ed. Robert M. Doran, and H. Daniel Monsour.

The addition of charisms and the gifts of the Holy Spirit is inspired by Balthasar's writings, and I also find quite persuasive the latter's study of faith as created participation in God's own self-witness; see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Seeing the Form*, vol. 1 of *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, ed. Joseph Fessio, S.J., and John Riches (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), part 1 passim. Lonergan and Balthasar both follow Aquinas in understanding the divine missions as the eternal processions of Word and Spirit linked to created, contingent, external terms.

and a particular reading of it must be listed among the formative influences on the theology that would address it. If 'a theology mediates between a cultural matrix and the significance and role of a religion within that matrix,'<sup>14</sup> the mediation is not a one-way street. It is rather, I think, one example of what Lonergan once called a mutual self-mediation.<sup>15</sup>

### *1.2 Categories and Correlation*

Such an attempt to mediate religion and culture runs the risk of being understood in accord with a method of correlation. In *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, I engaged the method of correlation in a somewhat random fashion that really cannot qualify as dialectic in the strict sense in which Lonergan uses this term to designate a complete set of theological operations. A very accurate ordering of my criticisms of this

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14 Lonergan, *Method in Theology* xi.

15 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, Frederick E. Crowe, and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996) 160-82, esp. 174-76. This paper presents probably Lonergan's most detailed discussion of the notion of mediation. The application of the notion of mutual self-mediation to theology's task of mediating religion and culture is mine, but I believe it corresponds to Lonergan's understanding of the situation as theological source, as expressed in the chapter on communications in *Method in Theology*. For an interpretation of this chapter that emphasizes the theological role of the situation, see Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* 12-16.

method appears in an article in *Theological Studies* by Neil Ormerod.<sup>16</sup> Rather than repeating his summary, I simply refer readers to his helpful comments.

The claim, then, is that methods of correlation displace the relation between the realities named in what Lonergan calls the special theological categories (categories proper to theology) and the realities named in what he calls the general theological categories (categories shared with other disciplines). The displacement is into a relation between religion and situation. The displacement occurs because of a neglect of two facts: (1) each set of categories names particular realities that cannot be named at all by the other set or reduced to realities named by the other set, and (2) both sets of categories are to be employed in any elucidation of both situations and the Christian message.

Were this not the case, then Aquinas, for example, would have needed nothing more than an Aristotle complemented by Thomas's own philosophic addition of the act of existence to have attained a systematic theology adequate for his day. But Aristotle provided Thomas with only general categories, categories that the latter's theology shared with other disciplines as those other disciplines were understood and practiced in his time. A distinct set of categories was required to name realities that the other disciplines did not have the equipment to name: categories that articulated in systematic detail the immanent intelligibility summarily contained in the theorem of the supernatural. Again, and from the other side, were our principle not true, then Bonaventure's relative neglect of categories that name realities that are not proper to theology but that are discussed in greater detail in other sciences would have sufficed; and, on the present analysis at least, it did not suffice, even in his own time.<sup>17</sup> (In addition, it may well be asked whether

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16 Neil Ormerod, 'Quarrels with the Method of Correlation,' *Theological Studies* 57 (1996) 707-19.

17 'The natural objective of our intellectual desire to know is the concrete universe.

Theology can succeed as a systematic understanding only if it is assigned a

Aquinas was fully successful in deriving and employing special categories, but that is a separate question.)<sup>18</sup>

### *1.3 Lonergan, Balthasar, and the Question of Categories*

The issue, of course, is not simply one of providing an exegesis of the two greatest theologians of the Middle Ages. It perdures into our own time, as the problem faced in this study illustrates. Lonergan provides, I maintain, the principal key to the generation and derivation of theology's general categories, for the base of those categories is precisely 'the attending, inquiring, reflecting, deliberating subject along with the operations that result from attending, inquiring, reflecting, deliberating and with the structure within which the operations occur':<sup>19</sup> that is to say, the intentionally conscious subject that is the focus of most of Lonergan's principal concerns. If one wants to employ general categories in one's theology and to do so in a manner that can give an

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determinate position in the totality of human knowledge, with determinate relations to all other branches. This further step was taken by Aquinas. Where Bonaventure had been content to think of this world and all it contains only as symbols that lead the mind ever up to God, Aquinas took over the physics, biology, psychology, and metaphysics of Aristotle to acknowledge not symbols but natural realities and corresponding departments of natural and human science.' Bernard Lonergan, 'Method in Catholic Theology,' in *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-1964* 45-46.

18 It is significant that despite Balthasar's frequent references to Aquinas, he does not include Aquinas among the theologians whose contributions to theological *aesthetics* he studies in his volumes on theological styles.

19 Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 285-86.

account of itself and of where these categories come from, one will find relatively little help in Balthasar. But Balthasar is brilliant on the special categories – in many instances, I think, more illuminating than Lonergan. One reason for this lies in the fact that he has grasped that such categories derive by and large from an elucidation of the aesthetic and dramatic elements of Christian experience and of the Christian ‘form.’

A major question is whether one even wants general categories in one’s theology. Within the Catholic tradition, a decision in favor of carefully worked out general categories is a decision in continuity with the Aristotelian-Thomist heritage, no matter how different from Aristotle’s notion of science, preserved by Aquinas (not without ambiguity<sup>20</sup>), is the modern conception on which we must rely today. And a decision to the effect that such categories are of little theological moment is a decision for a more Bonaventurian emphasis. A contemporary theology that does not have carefully derived general categories or the resources to derive them runs the risk, I believe, of a revelational positivism. If Balthasar avoids this risk – and I think he does – it is partly due to the extraordinary breadth of literary and artistic cultivation that he manifests on almost every page of his writings. But also, he knows that what we are calling general categories are essential even if he does not provide much help for deriving them. He insists, for example, that ‘a true science of living nature’ and ‘a science of man’s cultural utterances’ are needed ‘if theology, as the science of “faith,” is not to persist in its abstraction and isolation from the “exact” sciences.’<sup>21</sup> A theology that would build in part on his contributions must include general categories if that theology is to perform its function of mediating between Christian truth and that global set of cultural matrices that

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20 See Bernard Lonergan, ‘Aquinas Today: Tradition and Innovation,’ in *A Third Collection* 35-54.

21 Balthasar, *Seeing the Form* 447.

is our contemporary world; and Lonergan provides, I think, the key elements to the derivation of such general categories.

On the other hand, if a theology that neglects general categories risks succumbing to a revelational positivism, a theology that insists on a fully developed set of general categories risks interpreting its method as one of correlation. But as Balthasar avoids revelational positivism, so Lonergan avoids correlation. This is due to his insistence (1) that special categories name distinct realities and (2) that these distinct realities precisely in their distinctness feature in the full explanation of the events studied not only in theology but also in human science.<sup>22</sup> Another way of making sure the danger is transcended would be by firming up the aesthetic and dramatic base for the derivation of the special categories, and this is what Balthasar provides. As I have argued elsewhere independently of any influence from Balthasar, Lonergan's work needs to be complemented by a fuller consideration than appears in his writings of another constitutive dimension of human consciousness besides the intentional operations of

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22 While 'the theologian cannot contribute directly either to the abstract theory or to the concrete relevance or to the awareness of the material circumstances of empirical human science,' nonetheless these sciences 'consider man in his concrete performance, and that performance is a manifestation not only of human nature but also of human sin, not only of nature and sin but also of a de facto need of divine grace, not only of a need of grace but also of its reception and of its acceptance or rejection. It follows that an empirical human science cannot analyze successfully the elements in its object without an appeal to theology. Inversely, it follows that ... theologians have to take a professional interest in the human sciences and make a positive contribution to their methodology.' 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) 765, 767.

knowing and willing that Lonergan elucidates: the dimension that, from a purely empirical point of view, is what we call the sensitive psyche, but that more fully can be called an aesthetic and dramatic operator of human integrity and artistry. The appropriation of this operator, as nature and as healed and elevated by grace, will be central in grounding the derivation of the special categories.

My own efforts to explain what I called psychic self-appropriation through ‘psychic conversion’ were undertaken with this in view. In a series of articles in the late 1970s and early 1980s and in two books published during the same years, I argued that Lonergan’s work stands in need of an aesthetic-dramatic complement if it is to realize its full potential in the generation of a renewed theology.<sup>23</sup> I now believe that the emphases that earlier I grouped under the rubric of psychic conversion may afford at least part of the link between Lonergan and Balthasar.

From the other side, while Balthasar, informed by such aesthetic and dramatic emphases, provides much of the necessary guidance for the derivation of special categories, and especially for the employment of categories that would result from the theologian’s appropriation of the ecclesial and theological tradition, his work, for reasons listed later when I treat Lonergan’s contributions, needs to be integrated with the latter’s disengagement of the structures of our intention of the true and the good and with the

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23 The articles are collected in *Theological Foundations 1: Intentionality and Psyche* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1995); the two books are *Subject and Psyche* (second, revised ed., Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1993) and *Psychic Conversion and Theological Foundations: Toward a Reorientation of the Human Sciences* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2006). The most complete statement on psychic conversion can be found in *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, chapters 2, 6-10.

particular ‘take’ on the aesthetic and dramatic complement to Lonergan that I have suggested in writing of psychic conversion.

Such is the general program here envisioned. But I have also mentioned the theology of liberation as a significant contributor to our efforts. Two emphases of this theology are already at least implicitly informative of official church teaching on social issues: the preferential option for the poor in church ministry, and the hermeneutically privileged position of the marginalized in the interpretation at least of contemporary situations. I have already argued in some detail that these two emphases can be given something of a transcendental grounding when they are considered in the terms provided by the scale of values that Lonergan suggests and that I have tried to develop.<sup>24</sup> Now I would suggest that they can also be integrated with Balthasar’s Trinitarian dramatics, with the theology of God’s eternal kenotic self-transcendence not only in the giving over of the Word of life for the salvation of the human race but also in the universal mission of the Holy Spirit.<sup>25</sup>

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24 On the scale of values, see Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 31-32; for the development, see Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, chapter 4 and parts 2-4 passim; on the grounding of the liberation emphases, but with more attention paid to cultural values than is found in most liberation authors, see *ibid.*, parts 3 and 4 passim.

25 2009: I have subsequently developed some reservations regarding Balthasar’s Trinitarian theology. These are expressed in ‘The First Chapter of *De Deo Trino, Pars Systematica: The Issues*,’ *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 18:1 (2000) 27-48, which will be uploaded on this site, probably as ‘Essays in Systematic Theology 7.’ Moreover, the universal mission of the Holy Spirit is perhaps not as clear in Balthasar’s theology as the text here suggests.

These liberation emphases, in fact, are responsible for my stress on the universality of the mission of the Holy Spirit. But such universality will be insisted on, I believe, also in direct proportion to the extent to which one is willing to allow general categories into one's theological synthesis. There is something that God is always doing in the world, even independently of God's explicit revelation in Christ Jesus, and so something that always bears a relation to the realities named by the general categories. Revelation enables us to give a name to this 'what God is doing,' and one theological way of naming it is to say that what God is always doing is linking the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit with a created external term called grace. That linking is universal. It is a law of creation, but one that can be known only because of Christian revelation. It occurs and has occurred whether or not Christian revelation has enabled its recipients to name it as the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the divine *Dicere* and *Verbum*. This indwelling makes it possible that the image of the eternal *Dicere* and *Verbum* and *Amor Procedens* is present and actualized wherever intelligence, rationality, and moral responsibility are exercised authentically and habitually: the intelligence, rationality, and moral responsibility that are the grounds of the derivation of the general categories.

Obviously, the three theological achievements on which we take our stand represent options that are not easily synthesized. From a relatively superficial point of view they represent options in the center (Lonergan), on the right (Balthasar), and on the left (liberation theology) in twentieth-century theology. At a deeper and seemingly more conclusive level, are there not several contradictions among the respective emphases of these admittedly influential accomplishments – contradictions that render any synthesis impossible? Let us pursue the question in greater detail.

## **2 'Permanent One-sidedness' and 'Transcendental Method'**

Balthasar's insistence on the 'permanent one-sidedness' of the theologically grounding act of God in granting us a participation in divine being,<sup>26</sup> and especially on the 'objective' nature of that act and of the evidence for the act, might seem for someone schooled in Lonergan's thought to be positivistic, in the sense of a 'revelational positivism.' Again, especially given Balthasar's predilection for ocular analogies for knowledge, it might be interpreted as naively realistic, in the sense of entertaining a notion of the real as the 'already out there now to be known by taking a good look, by seeing everything that is there and nothing that is not there.' Again, it might seem to introduce into the foundational dimension of theology – and Balthasar claims to be doing (and is indeed doing) precisely 'fundamental theology' when he speaks like this – what for some students of Lonergan might be too much of a doctrinal or dogmatic component.<sup>27</sup> Some might prefer, at least in 'foundations,' a more generic objectification of 'religious conversion,' one that barely mentions a revelation and the unique form that such a revelation must of necessity bear, an objectification that in effect treats that unique form as little or nothing more than a particular culturally and historically conditioned

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26 'We must ... never lose from sight the permanent one-sidedness, fundamental to the process of Christian revelation, of God's act whereby he grants us participation in his being, which is his act in Jesus Christ, who can be approached only with personal categories.' Balthasar, *Seeing the Form* 181.

27 Balthasar insists on the 'inseparability' of fundamental theology and 'dogmatics.'

Ibid. 9. Lonergan makes a distinction between foundations and doctrines as functional specialties. But (1) Balthasar is not thinking in terms of functional specialization, and (2) distinction is not separation. Lonergan students who prefer the more generic notion of religious conversion would do well to ponder the following sentence: 'The conversion, formulated as horizon in foundations, will possess not only personal but also social and doctrinal dimensions.' Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 142.

variant on a generic and universal form. For Balthasar (correctly, I believe), one will never get to Christian doctrines or systematics if one's 'foundations' or 'fundamental theology' (as presentation of 'subjective evidence') is that generic. But it must be said, too, that when Lonergan tells us what he means by 'religious conversion,' he almost always appeals to Romans 5.5: 'God's love has flooded our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us'; and such an appeal has a definite doctrinal content.

Whatever our muted criticisms of Balthasar may be – and some of them will appear shortly – they will not involve such suspicions of positivism, naive realism, or dogmatism. It is, I believe, quite possible to reconcile Lonergan's form of 'transcendental method' with Balthasar's insistence on the 'permanent one-sidedness' of God's grace and revelation, and in the next several paragraphs I will present some arguments to this effect.

First, then, to agree with Lonergan that the objects of theology do not lie outside the transcendental field, since outside that field there is nothing at all,<sup>28</sup> is not to collapse the 'transcendental field' to created nature and perhaps a general revelation; it is not to deny the particular and absolutely supernatural component of that field revealed in the old and new covenants; it is not to talk of the supernatural in a manner that does not adequately distinguish it from human nature, its yearnings and aspirations, its longings and intentionality. Rather, the 'transcendental field' itself includes the supernatural component, and for Lonergan there is an *absolutely* supernatural dimension, a dimension that not only is in no way at all a product of human knowing, desiring, or willing, but that is also beyond the proportion of *any* created reality. The 'sole ground and measure' of the absolutely supernatural is God,<sup>29</sup> and this component inserts into human life 'truths

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28 Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 23.

29 Lonergan, *Insight* 747.

beyond human comprehension, ... values beyond human estimation, ... an alliance and a love that, so to speak, brings God too close to man.<sup>30</sup>

Second, there are no grounds in Lonergan's writings to limit the subjective side of the transcendental field to the experiential objectivity of data within this world joined to the four transcendental precepts provided by Lonergan – Be attentive, Be intelligent, Be reasonable, Be responsible. The transcendental precepts, rather, are rooted in natural capacities that themselves are obediential potency for grace, including the grace of the specific revelation in which both outer word and inner word (Lonergan) or, again, both form and perception of form (Balthasar) are from God.<sup>31</sup>

Third, it is a profound misreading of Lonergan to take statements such as those in which he demands that every term and relation in systematic theology be traceable to roots in intentional consciousness<sup>32</sup> to mean that intentional consciousness is the source of every theological meaning. If a Lonergan student were to move in this direction, Balthasar's points against the transcendental methods with which he was familiar (which, it would seem, did not include Lonergan's method) would correctly be brought to bear also against such an employment of Lonergan's method. But this is not what Lonergan intended. It is a far cry from what he intended. There are a few ambiguous texts from his later years that could be interpreted along such lines,<sup>33</sup> but if such an interpretation is correct it would mean that Lonergan's thinking had undergone a major change without his telling us that this was the case. And Lonergan, it seems, had the very helpful habit of alerting his readers if he had changed his mind on something. A useful rule of thumb in

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30 Ibid.

31 On obediential potency, see Lonergan, 'De ente supernaturali,' thesis 4.

32 For example, Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 343.

33 For example, the paper 'Religious Knowledge' (*A Third Collection* 129-45) might lend itself to such an interpretation.

reading him is that, if he has not so alerted us, then later positions, especially where they are ambiguously expressed, are to be interpreted as consistent developments on earlier ones, not as contradicting them. And on the issue of the distinct supernatural dimension to human reality and to human experience that is revealed precisely as one-sidedly from God in the old and new covenants, the earlier writings contain no ambiguity whatsoever. On this issue at least, Lonergan does not qualify for inclusion among Balthasar's transcendental opponents.

Can we generalize this claim, so that it decisively eliminates this issue as one that would divide the two emphases? I think we can. When Balthasar displays his pervasive distrust of transcendental anthropologies, precisely because they tend to minimize or cancel out the 'permanent one-sidedness' that we have just discussed, his instincts are, I think, in continuity with the Catholic tradition in which he stands. From what we have just argued, we can conclude that this distrust does not apply to Lonergan's early theology of grace, including the emphases that appear toward the end of *Insight*, nor at least to his intentions in his later writings about grace. But does it apply at least to the possible 'effective history' of some of Lonergan's work, where students of Lonergan might use the language of *Method in Theology* ('being in love') while perhaps overlooking the emphases of his early theology of grace, or even while not attending to these emphases at all? It is possible, I think, to assimilate Lonergan's work on grace too closely to Karl Rahner's – Rahner seems to have been Balthasar's principal protagonist on the issue of 'transcendental method' – and so to interpret it too much along the lines of a method of correlation.<sup>34</sup>

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34 On Rahner's use of a method of correlation, see Stephen Fields, 'Balthasar and Rahner on the Spiritual Senses,' *Theological Studies* 57:2 (June 1996) 224-41, esp. 229-33.

The difference between Rahner and Lonergan on this point is (2009: may be) rooted in

Perhaps the following distinction may be helpful. When a ‘transcendental’ analysis of human intentionality turns to the question of grace, it has, I think, two options. It can regard the intentionality that it has disengaged as being in obediential potency to a *created* communication of the divine nature, which it then must articulate as best it can in categories of interiority that relate it to the intentional operations already disengaged.<sup>35</sup> Then it is the created communication of the divine nature, a created grace that is itself absolutely supernatural, and not human nature itself, that is the proximate and required disposition for the divine indwelling, however this relation between created and uncreated grace may be conceived – and I prefer Lonergan’s conception of sanctifying grace as a ‘consequent condition’ for the gift of God’s own life. This option, I believe, is the one Lonergan took, and unless I am mistaken, it is in fundamental harmony with Henri de Lubac’s position in *The Mystery of the Supernatural*,<sup>36</sup> with which, I presume, Balthasar would have no difficulty, given his frequent positive references to de Lubac’s

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the difference between Rahner’s preapprehension of being and Lonergan’s open, unrestricted desire to know, which is a pure heuristic notion or anticipation of being.

35 I have begun to think through such an option in ‘Consciousness and Grace,’ *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 11:1 (Spring 1993) 51-75, in ‘Revisiting “Consciousness and Grace,”’ *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 13:2 (Fall 1995) 151-59, and in “‘Complacency and Concern’ and a Basic Thesis on Grace,’ *Lonergan Workshop* 13 (1997) 57-78. These papers represent only a beginning, and one that is already developing thanks to the feedback they have received. 2009: These papers have been uploaded on this site as the first three ‘Essays in Systematic Theology.’

36 Henri de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967).

work on this entire question.<sup>37</sup> It also fits quite well with Balthasar's lengthy and insightful treatment of the 'light of faith,'<sup>38</sup> if I understand that treatment correctly; and so I will maintain that it is an option with which Balthasar would have little if any difficulty.

On the other hand, a transcendental anthropology might posit human nature itself, however this is articulated, as the proximate disposition for the divine indwelling. This is more problematic. It runs the danger of necessitating God to give grace, of not respecting divine freedom in its impenetrable mysteriousness, of bypassing the permanent one-sidedness of God's overture to us. Ultimately this is, I am convinced, a semi-Pelagian option. And it can tend to make of the indwelling God something of a formal cause of human existence, a doctrine that is opposed at least to the teaching of the Council of Trent. Rahner, it may be said, *tends* in these directions, usually more by way of neglect of some careful differentiations than by way of explicit affirmations (except on the 'quasi formal causality' of the divine indwelling, where he is quite explicit).<sup>39</sup> Even his

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37 2009 note: It should be added that Lonergan had difficulties with de Lubac's earlier formulation in *Surnaturel*. See Bernard Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, vol. 18 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Philip J. McShane (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002) 350.

38 Balthasar, *Seeing the Form* 131-218. 2009: However, there is needed a study of the comparison and contrast between Balthasar and Lonergan on this question.

39 See Karl Rahner, 'Some Implications of the Scholastic Concept of Uncreated Grace,' *Theological Investigations*, vol. 1, trans. Cornelius Ernst (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961) 319-46. The merit of this seminal paper is its insistence on the priority of uncreated to created grace; the problem lies in the notion of quasi formal causality. Rahner interprets the ontology of the divine indwelling as continuous with Aquinas's ontology of the beatific vision. Lonergan does not. 2009 addition: A helpful

‘supernatural existential’, I believe, is at times articulated in a manner that could be interpreted as referring, not to what for Lonergan (and for Balthasar) is supernatural but to what is natural and so in *remote* (not proximate) obediencial potency to the divine indwelling. Balthasar is rightly suspicious of such tendencies, but his suspicions do not seem to me to extend to Lonergan’s intention, which corresponds to the alternative option on the relation between grace and intentionality presented here.

### 3 Mediation

Next there is the issue of mediation as a theological task. For Lonergan ‘a theology mediates between a cultural matrix and the significance and role of a religion within that matrix.’ One might ask whether it is not rather the case for Balthasar (as for Barth) that the principal mediation that theology performs is, in fact if not in principle, a mediation between God’s revelation and the faith of the Church, and even that, since God’s revelation has its own unique form, any attempt at philosophic or human-scientific or other cultural mediation might only empty that revelation of its unique form.

I say, ‘in fact if not in principle,’ because there are statements in Balthasar’s work that indicate that he wants more. He insists, as we have seen, that ‘a true science of living nature’ and ‘a science of man’s cultural utterances’ are needed ‘if theology, as the science of “faith,” is not to persist in its abstraction and isolation from the “exact” sciences.’<sup>40</sup> But serious questions remain (1) whether the resources are present in his

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treatment of this issue was provided in a paper delivered by Michael Stebbins at the 2001 convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America: ‘Rahner and Lonergan on the Natural-Supernatural Distinction: Where the Differences Lie, and Why they Matter.’

40 *Seeing the Form* 447.

theology to deliver such a mediation, and (2), if they are not, what happens to the ongoing influence of his thought, no matter what his own intentions and desires may have been. In fact, I believe, there is an ambiguity in his work over exactly what he wants in this regard. It shows up, for instance, almost every time he relates an analysis of Christian experience to psychological interpretations; it is as though the two realms had nothing to do with one another.<sup>41</sup> Not only would I argue instead, based on my understanding of Lonergan, for a *mutual self-mediation* of the two interpretations, such that each has something to offer to the self-understanding of the other, but also I would posit (1) an ultimately theological component to the foundations even of such a science as psychology as well as (2) a component from a reoriented psychology in the foundations of theology, a component that would ground the employment of aesthetic categories in theology.<sup>42</sup>

Lonergan makes a statement quite similar to Balthasar's regarding an integration of theology with human science, when he insists that 'the church can become a fully conscious process of self-constitution only when theology *unites itself with all other relevant branches of human studies*.'<sup>43</sup> He is aware, though, that for this to happen, theology must be provided with a critical ground for deriving the categories that theology will share with these other branches. And on this score he delivers. Such is one of the theological functions of his book *Insight*,<sup>44</sup> and such too is one of his principal contributions to the content (not just the method) of systematic theology.

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41 See, for example, *ibid.* 231, 254, 257, 366.

42 See, for example, Doran, *Psychic Conversion and Theological Foundations* *passim*; *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, part 2.

43 Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 364.

44 For the centrality of *Insight* in Lonergan's view of the general categories, see *Method in Theology* 285-88.

#### 4 Special Categories and Theological Aesthetics

The question remains, however, as to how theology derives its own proper categories. Lonergan is undoubtedly correct that the de facto ground for the derivation of these categories is ‘the authentic or unauthentic Christian, genuinely in love with God, or failing in that love, with a consequent Christian or unchristian outlook and style of living.’<sup>45</sup> But Balthasar provides an aesthetic and dramatic base for such authenticity or unauthenticity, and this base, I believe, makes him more helpful than Lonergan on the derivation of the special categories. Balthasar, then, offers something that Lonergan lacks, and it lies especially in the emphasis he places on the aesthetic form and dramatic pattern not only of a human life lived in accord with God’s revelation in Christ Jesus – Lonergan too is eloquent and profound on ‘dramatic artistry’ and on the dramatic pattern in general of human experience, where his readiness to employ general categories as well as special theological categories when speaking of such a life illuminates this pattern itself – but also and radically of the inner-Trinitarian, eternal life of God, and so of the theology that would attempt to understand and speak of that life. Lonergan, again, is extremely helpful on the aesthetic and dramatic patterns of human experience, and much of my early work was an expansion of his suggestions on what he calls dramatic artistry. But it is the dramatic pattern of experience that is the pattern in which we live, and the objectification of integrity demands a theological aesthetics and dramatics to complement and contextualize Lonergan’s emphasis on cognitional process and intellectual conversion.<sup>46</sup> Balthasar teaches us that this aesthetics and dramatics will reflect not only

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45 Ibid. 292.

46 For an early affirmation of this claim on my part, without any influence from Balthasar, see my ‘Aesthetics and the Opposites,’ in *Theological Foundations I* 105-31, and ‘Dramatic Artistry in the Third Stage of Meaning,’ *ibid.* 231-77.

human life but also the inner life of God as the latter has been revealed to us in Christ Jesus. His efforts will ground the derivation of the special categories, which in many instances are more appropriately generated from those aesthetic and dramatic constituents of theological foundations that in a different context I tried to emphasize in writing of psychic conversion.

## **5 Suggestions toward Synthesis from a Lonergan Perspective**

The differences between these approaches obviously cannot be minimized. And the contributions of each must be acknowledged. I offer the following suggestions as a student of Lonergan concerned to benefit from Balthasar's contributions.

(1) The aesthetic 'form' of revelation emphasized by Balthasar is what Lonergan would call *elemental or potential meaning*. If the meaning is to become formal (conceptual), actual (affirmed in judgment), and constitutive of the life of the community, then the manifestation of aesthetic form requires, to begin with, linguistic formulation. Balthasar himself does not leave the form at the level of elemental or potential meaning, but has written extensively to promote its meaning from that elementary level to realms of meaning that truly can be constitutive of human living.

But such a coupling can be generalized: it is the intelligibility of the very process from the events of revelation, which, Avery Dulles has argued, by and large take the form of symbolic communication,<sup>47</sup> to scripture. And scripture and its categories are not sufficient in theology's mediating task, a fact that was discovered by the Church very early on. For scripture remains largely elemental even in its linguistic expression, as

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47 See Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (New York: Doubleday, 1985) chapter 9.

Lonergan has emphasized when commenting, for example, on St Paul.<sup>48</sup> Theological exigencies introduce a further requirement, for ‘seeing the form’ requires not only hearing the word but also and above all understanding and advancing its meaning, and judging the truth (1) of the scriptural witness, (2) of one’s understanding of this witness, and (3) of the advances in meaning achieved in one’s own environment. Such understanding and judgment occur always in ever new cultural contexts and under the pressure of ever new questions raised by these contexts. This theological exigency is imposed by the very requirement of fidelity to the elemental form itself. While the meaning will cease to exist in the Christian community and in the world without its elemental (indeed iconic) representations and manifestations, the meaning of what is seen in these appearances cannot remain formal, actual, and constitutive in the Christian community without the theological efforts that lift intersubjective, artistic, symbolic, and incarnate carriers of meaning — aesthetic form — to linguistic formulation, sometimes (depending on cultural exigencies) in quite technical terms.<sup>49</sup> The church learned the necessity of ever new formal conceptual expression in the painful process that led from scripture to the Council of Nicea.<sup>50</sup> Even Athanasius, the defender par excellence of

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48 See, for example, Bernard Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, ed. Robert M. Doran and Frederick E. Crowe, vol. 10 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993) 67, 220-21.

49 On potential, formal, actual, and constitutive meaning, see Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 74-76; Lonergan uses the terms ‘full acts of meaning’ and ‘full terms of meaning’ for what I am here calling ‘actual meaning.’ On carriers of meaning, see *ibid.* 57-73.

50 See Lonergan’s frequent and, I believe, convincing explanations of the intellectual exigencies that surfaced in this process; most fully (though still sketchily) elaborated in prolegomena to *The Triune God: Doctrines*, vol. 11 in *Collected Works of Bernard*

Nicea, regretted that the Council had to employ a category not found in scripture (*homoousios*), but he insisted that it had to be done to meet the questions that had arisen in his time. Proclamation, hearing, understanding, judging, and deciding, as well as the continuing manifestation of the form itself in the living witness of the church, are all, despite the one-sidedness of the relation between the revelation and culture (a one-sidedness grounded in the one-sidedness of the relation between the revealing God and persons and communities gifted with divine life), functions in part of a cultural matrix.

(2) This insistence on complementing manifestation with formal, full, and constitutive meaning does not detract one bit from Balthasar's insistence that 'the evidence of the light of faith shines forth from the object of faith as objective evidence' through the evidential force of the form itself.<sup>51</sup> But it adds to this insistence the claim that more is needed if we are to *know* this, in the sense of the full human knowing that consists in experience, understanding, and judgment. Evidence is not yet truth.

Balthasar's aesthetic and dramatic emphases, then, need the precision, the control of meaning, offered by Lonergan's transcendental analysis of our intentional operations, not because Balthasar's emphases are wrong – they are not – but because, to put it simply but directly, elemental 'form' as elemental cannot responsibly be affirmed explicitly or implicitly as the criterion of truth and goodness, even when the form is precisely that given by God in revelation. Human knowing is inescapably discursive. If beauty is the splendor of truth, then however transcendental the beautiful may be, the criterion of what is beautiful in the authentic apprehension of a spiritual being, of a being whose central

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Lonergan, trans. Michael G. Shields, ed. Robert M. Doran and H. Daniel Monsour (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009). A more complete account would appeal to the emergent probability of meaning itself, that is, to the ontology of meaning. On the ontology of meaning, see *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, chapter 19.

<sup>51</sup> Balthasar, *Seeing the Form* 172-73.

form is spirit, must correspond to the criterion of what is true. And the criterion of what is true is measured by the unrestricted orientation to an objective named being, an orientation whose dimensions or levels Lonergan has differentiated with a clarity not achieved by any other thinker with whom I am familiar. Balthasar actually provides eloquent witness to this measuring.<sup>52</sup> But he is moving continually in the realm of what Lonergan calls mystery, and mystery is differentiated from myth, not on the basis of its own elemental embodiments of potential meaning, but because of its correspondence with a spiritual intention of what is intelligible, what is true, what is real, and what is good.<sup>53</sup> The latter transcendentals are the ones that Lonergan has disengaged, and their disengagement is needed for the critically grounded, and in this sense transcendental, disengagement of what is beautiful. It is the correspondence of intellectual or spiritual and sensitive operators that Lonergan proposes at the beginning of chapter 17 of *Insight* that grounds the very viability of much of Balthasar's project. And if this is the case, then what I have called psychic conversion may be the bridge between Balthasar's forgotten transcendental (the beautiful) and the transcendentals that Lonergan has retrieved in interiorly differentiated consciousness (the intelligible, the true, the real, and the good).

(3) The elevation of potential meaning to formal, actual, and constitutive meaning, through the mutual self-mediation of religion and culture effected by linguistic carriers of meaning, will entail distinguishing culturally relative from non-negotiable elements in the Christian elemental form itself. Balthasar has correctly pointed to the aesthetic and dramatic constitution of Christian truth *ab aeterno*, and this above all is

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52 See his profound meditations on the light of Being and the light of faith in *Seeing the Form* 131-218.

53 On mystery and myth, see Lonergan, *Insight* 554-72, and within the Christian context, especially 744-45.

what we must appropriate from his theology. All his intentions to the contrary notwithstanding, however, he may not have succeeded in avoiding a certain absolutizing of historical forms that are inevitably culturally relative. Many of these issues are met in principle, I believe, in Lonergan's references to and criticisms of a self-proclaimed normative 'classicist mentality' and the obstacles that this mentality presents to the fulfillment of Pope John's pastoral intention in calling the Second Vatican Council. Very few things are normative; no cultural forms as such are normative; the transcendental exigencies constitutive of authenticity (which, in a world where grace is a reality, include the exigencies prompted by the 'permanently one-sided' offer of grace) alone are normative. This is the issue.<sup>54</sup>

(4) If it is true that as manifestation, as the unity of seeing and seen, the form really *is* genuinely elemental or potential meaning, precisely as meaning, then because the Spirit blows where it will, wherever the Spirit of God is at work the form that is made formal meaning by the word and actual meaning by the true word and constitutive meaning by appropriation of the true word is *already embodied*, and so already *potential Christian meaning*. And where that is the case, the word that would elevate meaning to formal, actual, and constitutive status is disclosive of an otherwise perhaps anonymous grace already at work, whether in other religious traditions or, as is perhaps the more usual case, without any formal religious associations at all. Such an affirmation does not

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54 On classicism, see *inter alia* Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-1964*, index, under Classicism; on the Second Vatican Council see 'Pope John's Intention,' *A Third Collection* 224-38. It must be said, too, that Balthasar's rejection of integralism in the church is even more harsh than Lonergan's mockery of the classicist 'shabby shell of Catholicism' (*Method in Theology* 327). See Balthasar, 'The Contemporary Experience of the Church,' in *Spouse of the Word* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993) 13-14.

negate the fact that God's revelation takes a unique form. But it affirms a stronger doctrine of the universality of the mission of the Holy Spirit than might perhaps be found in any theological emphasis or tendency that would bind the Spirit too closely to a particular cultural pattern or to a particular rendition of the word, even of God's own outer word in history. While an exclusively revelational soteriology is not sufficient, Jesus *is* the revelation of what God, through the mission of the Holy Spirit, is always doing in the world. The mission of the Holy Spirit does not begin at Pentecost. With Frederick Crowe, we may want to speak of a *prior* mission of the Holy Spirit (prior to the mission of the Word in Christ Jesus).<sup>55</sup> The Christian form reveals the law of the cross, a law prefigured in the deuterio-Isaian vision of the Suffering Servant, but also a law that Balthasar has profoundly emphasized as constitutive of the very eternal Trinitarian life of God.<sup>56</sup> But if grace is universally offered, if there exists what Karl Rahner calls a supernatural existential (even if its conception must be more precise than Rahner's sometimes is), then that same law is also transcendently constitutive of the human

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55 Frederick E. Crowe, 'Son of God, Holy Spirit, and World Religions,' in Frederick E. Crowe, *Appropriating the Lonergan Idea*, ed. Michael Vertin (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1989) 324-43.

56 One presentation of this key dimension of Balthasar's theology can be found in *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, trans. Aidan Nichols (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1990). (2009: I do not wish to take a position on Balthasar's theology of Holy Saturday.) More fully in the volumes of *Theodrama: Theological Dramatic Theory* and *Theo-Logic* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press). See chapters 8-12 in Edward T. Oakes, *Pattern of Redemption: The Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (New York: Continuum, 1994). See also Gerald O'Hanlon, *The Immutability of God in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

existence that is made in the image of the same eternal triune God. This law is lived wherever love triumphs over hatred, hope over despair, faith over nihilistic cynicism, healing over the misadventures of biased or victimized men and women. It may be lived at times in places where official teaching bodies of the various churches may least expect to find it, especially if they cling to absolutized forms of God's work in history.

(5) Again, there is the issue of theology's categories. It is complex, and I have already come at it in several ways. Here I will attempt another approach, one that goes to the heart of other issues as well.

First, then, theology's mediation is not only disclosive of God's revelation. For (a) even such a disclosure is itself also a potential transformation, of the benign kind that happens when what was compact becomes differentiated. But (b) there are also transformations, or intended transformations, that are dialectical, in the strictest sense of this term, the sense that Lonergan has stressed in writing of dialectic as a set of operations of the human mind going to work on the movements of the human heart so as to articulate that radical transformation that can only be called conversion. Theology's word in a cultural matrix or in an ecclesial setting is often a word of negation, of resistance – a prophetic 'no' to a way of proceeding that can and must be named sin. That word must sometimes be addressed to the church itself and to its leaders, as well as to the wider society.

This second, dialectical sense of theology as transformative (and not purely disclosive) gives us one way of focusing on the pertinence of the issue of theological categories. For the dialectical 'no' is ineffectual unless it is joined to technically exact alternatives, and for these alternatives theological mediation must appeal to more than the specific categories of God's revelation in Christ Jesus. If we may take a simple and obvious example, we can presume from biblical revelation itself that God wants economic transactions to be just; but God has not revealed what constitutes a just economy. Theology must be concerned with such an issue, and it must show its concern

not only by decrying injustice but also by proposing what justice would be and by doing so at times in the most technical terms. It is no accident that the theologian Lonergan returned late in life to his early interest in macroeconomics; his efforts here were in effect his attempt to spell out in extremely technical fashion in what consists, at least in part, the economic integrity that as a theologian he believed was God's will for human societies; and it seems to have been his intention that these technical categories might someday be employed not only in a scientific economic theory but also in a moral theology that would formulate ethical positions on economic process.<sup>57</sup>

This is but one example of a far more general (and not always dialectical) insistence on Lonergan's part that a theology in direct discourse employs not only the categories specific to revelation but also the categories derived from dialogue with the disciplines that study the social, cultural, and psychological dimensions of human history and with the sciences of nonhuman nature. Such pursuits are no more inevitably engagements in human sin than is a theology concerned with the unique form of revelation inevitably sinless. That a theology employs both general and special categories does not make it an affair of the method of correlation. It does make it an affair, however, of human intelligence, and human intelligence raising ever further relevant questions is not human arrogance and sin but a dimension of human authenticity.

(6) What is a Lonergan student to do with Balthasar's frequent ocular analogies for knowing, his references to vision, his insistence on 'seeing the form?' I can treat this vexing problem only in passing, since I think my proposed resolution of it in terms of

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<sup>57</sup> The pertinent data on Lonergan's economic thought can be found in two volumes in his *Collected Works: Macroeconomic Dynamics: An Essay in Circulation Analysis*, ed. Fred Lawrence, Patrick Byrne, and Charles Hefling (volume 15, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), and *For a New Political Economy*, ed. Philip McShane (volume 21, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

psychic conversion would demand a distinct article; but let me indicate the direction in which I think we may move in order to resolve the problem.

I do not think Balthasar is susceptible to the charge of naive realism. He explicitly criticizes the naive realism of much of the critical-historical method in a manner that resembles Lonergan's critique of naive realism in some historical methods (though without Lonergan's sophistication in cognitional theory);<sup>58</sup> but more importantly, I do not think that Balthasar's frequent references to 'vision,' to 'seeing the form,' to the 'eyes of faith,' and so on, are any more indicative of naive realism than is Lonergan's reference to faith, 'the knowledge born of religious love,' as 'the eye of love.'<sup>59</sup> Such references to seeing, sight, vision, eyes of faith, or eyes of love are employing aesthetic, not epistemological or cognitional-theoretic, categories. What such analogies denote, when employed in such contexts, is the full embodied participation in grace that Balthasar speaks of as the spiritual senses and that Lonergan captures under the rubric of 'mystery.'

... though the solution [to the problem of evil] as a higher integration will be implemented principally in man's intellect and will through conjugate forms of faith and hope and charity, it must also penetrate to the sensitive level and envelop it. For, in the main, human consciousness flows in some blend of the dramatic and practical patterns of experience, and as the solution harmoniously continues the actual order of the universe, it can be successful only if it captures man's sensitivity and intersubjectivity ... since faith gives more truth than understanding comprehends, since hope reinforces the detached, disinterested, unrestricted desire to know, man's

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58 For Balthasar on naive realism, see *Seeing the Form* 535-44; for Lonergan on naive realism in certain conceptions of historical method, see *Method in Theology*, chapter 9.

59 Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 117.

sensitivity needs symbols that unlock its transforming dynamism and bring it into harmony with the vast but impalpable pressures of the pure desire, of hope, and of self-sacrificing charity.

It follows that the solution will be not only a renovation of will that matches intellectual detachment and aspiration, not only a new and higher collaboration of intellects through faith in God, but also a mystery that is at once symbol of the uncomprehended and sign of what is grasped and psychic force that sweeps living human bodies, linked in charity, to the joyful, courageous, wholehearted, yet intelligently controlled performance of the tasks set by a world order in which the problem of evil is not suppressed but transcended.<sup>60</sup>

## 6 A Point from Balthasar

The complementarity and integration to which we are drawing attention means, however, that aesthetic and dramatic form are analogously realized. Not only is there the elemental or potential meaning to which I have already referred, a meaning that requires elevation to linguistic and sometimes technical meaning to become formal, full, and constitutive,

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60 Lonergan, *Insight* 744-45. See also *ibid.* 763: ‘Considered in their relation to man’s sensitivity and intersubjectivity, (1) they [faith, hope, and charity] are announced through the signs that communicate the Gospel, (2) they constitute a new psychic integration through affective contemplation of the mystery of Christ and his Church, and (3) they call forth their own development inasmuch as they intensify man’s intersubjective awareness of the sufferings and the needs of mankind.’

‘It is to be noted that this transformation of sensitivity and intersubjectivity penetrates to the physiological level though the clear instances appear only in the intensity of mystical experience.’

but also, as I have argued elsewhere in some detail,<sup>61</sup> art is the culminating perfection of the highest level of intentional consciousness, and the creation and appropriation of the aesthetic and dramatic form of the gospel of God in Jesus Christ that, in the saint, follow upon, rather than precede, linguistic formulation, are of a different order from the elemental meanings that required linguistic expression in order to become truly constitutive, in fact in order to become more than merely potential meaning. Critically grounded systematic theology, however rigorous, indeed however brilliant, is hardly the apex of Christian expression. Ask Thomas Aquinas! Any method that would see only a one-way street between the aesthetic and dramatic, on the one hand, and the theoretical and systematic, on the other, such that the latter is always a development upon the former, is in fact so seriously in error that it may be at least incipiently heretical. Balthasar will forever remind us of the truth of this two-way relation between the aesthetic and the theoretical.

## **7 A Trinitarian Example**

Perhaps one systematic example of the integration here envisioned might help. Thus, while the Trinitarian theology that I envision would take many of its inspirations from Lonergan's astounding interpretation and development of the basically Thomist notion of intelligible (and intellectual) emanation, and would follow him through his reflections, in the terms thus provided, on the divine relations, the divine persons, and the divine missions, it would also pick up on a hint briefly articulated in one of Lonergan's posthumously published papers, to speak of the mutual self-mediation that constitutes the

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61 Doran, 'Aesthetics and the Opposites' (see above, note 46).

Trinitarian relations,<sup>62</sup> and into this framework it would place the emphases of Balthasar's dramatic Trinitarian vision. Balthasar is correct in highlighting the beautiful as a transcendental dimension within which to express the dramatic form not only of God's revelation but also of God's life of glory and of the kenotic death in God that occurs on the cross of Jesus, a death decreed 'from the foundations of the world' and so a death constitutive of the eternal mutual self-mediation of the divine persons. This emphasis can be integrated with the theology of intelligible emanations grounding Lonergan's Trinitarian systematics, by conceiving the procession of the eternal Word as the intelligible emanation of God's work of dramatic art.<sup>63</sup>

## **8 Liberation Theology**

I included among the principal elements to be synthesized here two emphases of Latin American liberation theology, and to these I must briefly turn. The reader may be surprised to see the conjunctions being proposed, this time of liberation emphases with Lonergan and Balthasar. The connection with Lonergan is more understandable, of course, since he emphasized history as a major concern, spoke eloquently and one might say even prophetically about bias and its socially distorting influences, proclaimed the possibility of healing in history, and turned to economic theory partly at least out of a profound concern for the social order. But Balthasar and liberation theology in the same

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62 The application of Lonergan's notion of mutual self-mediation to the trinitarian relations is mine.

63 [2009 note: In 'The First Chapter in of *De DeoTrino, Pars Systematica* : The Issues,' uploaded here as 'Essays in Systematic Theology 7,' I expresses some reservations regarding Balthasar's formulations of divine freedom. But these reservations do not affect the basic point that I am making here.]

synthesis? ‘You must be dreaming,’ I hear the respective advocates of each of these emphases saying.

Let me address first the integration of liberation theology with Lonergan, not only because it is easier to grasp but also because Lonergan can both transcendently ground the validity of Balthasar’s emphases and provide the possibility of a transcendental theological justification of key insights of the theology of liberation. As it is the structure of Lonergan’s achievement that enables a critical grounding of Balthasar when one complements Lonergan with psychic conversion, so it is by forcing the meaning of the scale of values that emerges especially in Lonergan’s later writings that we can ground the validity of some of the liberation emphasis. Again, as Balthasar will, I think, ultimately need Lonergan to control a differentiation of mystery from myth, so liberation theology can draw on Lonergan to ground a differentiation of praxis from technique. Not only is some liberation theology not Gospel but Law, but also some of it would substitute one set of alienations for another. We need a procedure that would cut to the heart of the violations of integrity responsible for all alienation, and Lonergan’s transcendental theological anthropology provides precisely that, at least when it is joined with psychic conversion and the further (but completely continuous) disengagement of the scale of values proposed in *Theology and the Dialectics of History*.<sup>64</sup>

Conversely, however, Lonergan’s work needs an integration with liberation theology, as I also argued in the same book. The gospel is preached to the poor. One has not really heard the gospel unless it has opened one to an awareness of one’s radical and inescapable solidarity with the poor. There are resources in Lonergan for a theology constructed out of such solidarity, and that kind of theology, I believe, brings those resources to their richest fulfillment as historically catalytic elements of meaning. Moreover, without that fulfillment the resources can be left hanging, as it were, in a

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64 See *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, chapter 4.

never-never land of heuristic possibilities for an *intellectual* but not a reasonable and responsible, that is, *factual* constitution of the human world. Often it is overlooked that Lonergan means and intends primarily praxis. I have found that, by forcing the meaning of his scale of values, we can satisfy some of his profound practical intentions, and that satisfaction will occur in a manner that integrates these intentions with liberation emphases. Again, while Marx radically missed out on correctly analyzing history, history *does* have a dialectical structure; and while we can begin from Lonergan's understanding of the dialectic of history and assemble a far more accurate understanding of history's structure than did Marx, nonetheless as we do so we will find both that at least some of the concerns that liberation theology has inherited from Marx remain valid and that we have a more adequate cognitive basis from which to proceed to meet them.

As for Balthasar, it may be the effective influence of his work as much as or more than the work itself that needs a good jolt of liberation theology. His understanding of the divine kenosis is actually very easily integrated with the liberation emphases, and it helps to keep those emphases rooted in charity rather than shifting their ground to social ideology. But one can also turn to Balthasar more out of a knee-jerk reaction against social ideology than for the sake of an agapic purification of social commitments. He can unfortunately become the darling of many who simply do not want the church to be the church of the poor. He can become an ideological figure, much against his own best intentions, I believe; and as in so many other instances, the best way to counteract this misuse of his work is not to oppose that work itself but to force the meaning of its own most profound inspiration. In Balthasar, that inspiration is found most clearly in his Trinitarian vision of the paschal mystery, and, conveniently enough, this is also the point of the most obvious contact between his work and the principal insights of liberation theology.