

**Essays In Systematic Theology 57:**  
**Generalized Isomorphism: The Key to Transposition<sup>1</sup>**

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‘... if modern theologians were to transpose medieval theory into the categories derived from contemporary interiority and its real correlatives, they would be doing for our age what the greater Scholastics did for theirs.’<sup>2</sup>

### **1 A Proposal**

I have tried for the past thirty years or more to begin implementing the agenda that Bernard Lonergan is proposing in this invitation to transposition and to encourage others to do the same. I have taken my inspiration from Lonergan’s work, and specifically from several examples of what I think he is talking about. I will mention three of these.

First, there is the transposition of ‘agent intellect’ into ‘the pure, unrestricted, detached desire to know.’ Frederick Crowe<sup>3</sup> points to several

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2 Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, vol. 14 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Robert M. Doran and John D. Didosky (Toronto: University of Toronto Press) 304.

3 See Frederick E. Crowe’s editorial note f to lecture 9 in Bernard Lonergan, *Understanding and Being*, vol. 5 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Elizabeth A. Morelli and Mark D. Morelli, revised and augmented by Frederick E. Crowe (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990) 419.

instances as early as the *verbum* articles<sup>4</sup> and to one instance in *Insight*<sup>5</sup> in which Lonergan understands agent intellect as the spirit of wonder and inquiry.

Second, Lonergan's transposition of sanctifying grace into the dynamic state of being in love with God exhibits a clear instance of what he means by transposing medieval theory into the categories derived from contemporary interiority and its real correlatives. This is expressly stated by Lonergan. 'To speak of sanctifying grace pertains to the stage of meaning when the world of theory and the world of common sense are distinct but, as yet, have not been explicitly distinguished from and grounded in the world of interiority. To speak of the dynamic state of being in love with God pertains to the stage of meaning when the world of interiority has been made the explicit ground of the worlds of theory and of common sense.'<sup>6</sup>

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4 See Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, vol. 2 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997) 60, 185, 193.

5 See Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, vol. 3 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) 394.

6 Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 107. In a class lecture that he gave at Boston College in 1980 during a seminar on *Method in Theology*, Lonergan indicated that the reality of what a theoretical theology called sanctifying grace has been spoken of in *three* distinct sets of categories corresponding to three distinct stages of meaning. What for biblical authors was justification was transposed by theoretically differentiated medieval theologians to sanctifying grace, *gratia gratum faciens*; and what theoretically differentiated medieval theologians called sanctifying grace is what Lonergan calls the gift of God's love, being in

And third, there is the transposition of Thomas's *malum culpae* and *malum poenae*, the evil of fault or culpable evil and the evil of punishment, into *Insight*'s 'basic sin' and 'moral evil.'

The clearest indications of Lonergan's intention in the latter regard are found by comparing what Lonergan says of 'basic sin' and 'moral evil' in *Insight* with what he says of *malum culpae* and *malum poenae* in thesis 17 of *De verbo incarnato* and in the corresponding treatment in his 1958 supplement on the redemption.

In thesis 17 Lonergan says, '*Evil* is the privation of good. In voluntary matters, evil is divided into culpable evil and the evil of punishment (*Summa theologiae*, 1, q. 48, a. 5), which arises from culpable evil and also inclines towards culpable evil. This inclination is found both in individuals, inasmuch as sins generate vices and vices incline towards further sins, and in human societies, in which sins corrupt human situations and these corrupt situations are in turn a most powerful inducement to further sins. See *Insight*, chapters 7, 18, and 20.'

In the supplement on redemption he writes: '... we must distinguish between culpable evil and the consequent evil of punishment. Culpable evil is the absence of rationality within the rational consciousness of a rational creature. The evil of punishment includes every evil consequence, whether within sinners themselves,

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love in an unrestricted fashion, being in love with God's own love flooding our hearts. See item 98304A0E080 on the website [www.bernardlonergan.com](http://www.bernardlonergan.com), where these comments may be heard in an audio recording restored by Greg Lauzon.

<sup>7</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *The Redemption*, vol. 9 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, trans. Michael G. Shields, ed. Robert M. Doran, H. Daniel Monsour, and Jeremy D. Wilkins (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018) 199.

or in their external actions, or in a change for the worse in the human situation, or in just retribution imposed because of fault.’<sup>8</sup>

These passages from two of Lonergan’s works on redemption correspond to what is said of basic sin and moral evil in *Insight*: ‘From the basic sin of not willing what one ought to will, there follow moral evils of omission and a heightening of the temptation in oneself or others to further basic sins. From the basic sin of not setting aside illicit proposals, there follows their execution and a more positive heightening of tension and temptation in oneself or in one’s social milieu.’<sup>9</sup> As Lonergan suggested in the references to *Insight* in the passage quoted above from thesis 17, the dynamics of basic sin and moral evil are spelled out in the treatments of bias and decline in chapter 7 of *Insight* and in the description of that particular evil consequence called moral impotence in chapter 18; and the possibilities of redemption and healing are contained in the heuristic structure of the divinely originated solution proposed in chapter 20. This treatment, it should be indicated, represents not only a transposition of medieval theory to contemporary interiority but also a delineation of the consequences of interior processes for society and history; and the latter can be developed further by locating the real correlatives of these processes in an elaboration of the scale of values. This is precisely what I attempted to do in *Theology and the Dialectics of History*.<sup>10</sup>

My several efforts at transposition, and in fact my basic understanding of what Lonergan means by transposition and of how he is inviting contemporary systematic theology to migrate beyond theoretically differentiated consciousness to

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8 Ibid. 451.

9 Lonergan, *Insight* 689.

10 Robert M. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990, 2001).

interiorly and religiously differentiated consciousness, have been challenged by Jeremy D. Wilkins, beginning with in an article published in *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies*. A detailed response to Wilkins's article, a response with which I am in full agreement, was published by H. Daniel Monsour in a subsequent issue of the same journal.<sup>11</sup> One of Wilkins's basic mistakes was to limit isomorphism to the type of metaphysical instances highlighted in chapters 14 and 15 of *Insight*, and so to limit the transpositions between contemporary interiority and medieval theory to the correspondence of cognitional theory with medieval metaphysics. A second basic mistake is to presume that the transposition is effective in only one direction, from interiority to metaphysics. A third basic mistake is to claim that the first two basic mistakes were also made by Lonergan, that is, that they reflect his position. They do not.

The second and third mistakes are easily responded to simply by quoting the passage with which I began this paper, where Lonergan encourages transpositions *from* medieval theory *to* contemporary interiority. The first mistake is corrected by arguing that Lonergan meant to include more in 'medieval theory' than metaphysics. The quotation given above from *Method in Theology* regarding sanctifying grace confirms this statement, as do the other two examples I have referred to: from agent intellect to the pure desire to know, and from the evil of fault and the evil of punishment to basic sin and moral evil.

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11 See Jeremy D. Wilkins, 'Method and Metaphysics in Theology: Lonergan and Doran,' *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 5:2 ns (Fall 2014) 53-85; H. Daniel Monsour, 'Some Reflections on Professor Wilkins's Paper, "Method and Metaphysics in Theology: Doran and Lonergan"' *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 6:1 ns (Spring 2015) 17-62.

Here I wish to suggest that perhaps we can move beyond these fruitless disputes to more positive creative work by finding in a generalized isomorphism the basis or key to the transpositions from medieval theory to contemporary interiority. In chapters 14 and 15 of *Insight* the three cognitional levels of consciousness – experience, understanding, and judgment – are argued to be isomorphic respectively with the three metaphysical elements known as potency, form, and act. But the ongoing development of the basic position on the subject, a development that was extended far beyond cognitional theory by Lonergan but that is not yet complete, will ground a generalized isomorphism between a more inclusive contemporary interiority and its objective real correlatives, and so facilitate the difficult transition, which I believe is axial or epochal in its proportions, from the second stage of meaning to the third and even a fourth<sup>12</sup> in a set of sweeping transpositions that will determine, among other things, the structure of a renewed systematic theology. The theology that I have in mind will take a long time to construct. We are very much in the beginning phases, and as Wilkins's work manifests, there is much resistance, just as there was to Socrates' efforts to launch what in Lonergan's model is called a second stage of meaning.

## **2 What Is Generalized Isomorphism?**

In what follows I will begin (and only begin) to generalize the notion of isomorphism introduced in chapters 14 and 15 of *Insight*, so that it is extended to include at least three further dimensions.

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12 See John D. Dadosky, 'Is There a Fourth Stage of Meaning?' *Heythrop Journal* 51 (2010) 768-80.

First, there is an isomorphism of the transcendental notion of value with the integral scale of values. This isomorphism defines the reach of the notion of value and specifies what would constitute the fullness of moral conversion. When elevated into a theological context, the result approximates asymptotically what would be realized in the reign of God in human affairs.

Second, there is an isomorphism of that level of the scale of values called ‘religious values’ with what I have called the immanent constitution of life in God.<sup>13</sup>

And third, there is an isomorphism of the ‘more rudimentary elements in cognitional’<sup>14</sup> and existential process with the preconceptual contents or elemental meanings that constitute the objective concern in the ‘pulsing flow of life’<sup>15</sup> of the process of psychic conversion. These preconceptual elements must be attended to and negotiated carefully if one hopes to ‘reach the virtually unconditioned’ at either the third or fourth level of consciousness and so to attain the ground for true judgments of both fact and value. If they are ignored or not negotiated as they must be for personal cognitional and existential integrity, one will short-circuit one’s quest for true judgments of fact and value and, more seriously, one will set the conditions for distortions in the dialectics of the subject, culture, and community, and so for aberrations at the levels of personal, cultural, and social values in the

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13 Robert M. Doran, *The Trinity in History*, vol. 1: *Missions and Processions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012) chapter 2.

14 Lonergan, *Insight* 306.

15 Ibid. 13.

scale of values.<sup>16</sup> The whole of *Theology and the Dialectics of History* is devoted to arguing for the significance for the integrity of historical process of what I have called psychic conversion. Psychic conversion, as the conversion from a repressive to a constructive functioning of the censor as it admits into consciousness images for insight joined to their appropriate affective correlatives, is the fruit of a shift from inattention to attentiveness regarding these preconceptual elements themselves – sensations, memories, images, conations, emotions, conscious bodily movements, spontaneous intersubjective responses, in short, empirical consciousness<sup>17</sup> – and their objective correlatives – what is sensed, what is remembered, what is imagined, what is striven for, what is moved toward or away from, who or what is desired or found repugnant.

The extension of the notion of isomorphism that I am suggesting is still open-ended, since both scientific research and philosophical reflection are needed to inform us with respect to the constitution and dynamics especially of the ‘lower’ and ‘higher’ levels of consciousness and to help us formulate the categories that would best express these discoveries. But the very possibility of the extension encourages *both* an ongoing transposition to contemporary interiority of theoretical achievements that merit a permanent heritage *and* a developing enrichment of our understanding of contemporary interiority itself.

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16 For the identification of the dialectics of the subject, culture, and community with, respectively, the levels of personal, cultural, and social values, see Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* passim.

17 See Lonergan, *Insight* 206.



The power of the principle of isomorphism is first expressed in chapter 14 of *Insight*, in a discussion of the method of metaphysics.<sup>18</sup> The transition from latent to explicit metaphysics is presented as a deduction. Its major premise is ‘the isomorphism that obtains between the structure of knowing and the structure of the known.’<sup>19</sup> That is to say, ‘If the knowing consists of a related set of acts and the known is the related set of contents of these acts, then the pattern of the relations between the acts is similar in form to the pattern of the relations between the contents of the acts. This premise is analytic.’<sup>20</sup> Primary minor premises in the same deductive transition name ‘a series of affirmations of concrete and recurring structures in the knowing of the self-affirming subject.’ The simplest but not the only such affirmation is ‘that every instance of knowing proportionate being consists of a unification of experiencing, understanding, and judging.’<sup>21</sup> Thus, ‘[i]t follows from the isomorphism of knowing and known that every instance of known proportionate being is a parallel unification of a content of experience, a content of understanding, and a content of judgment.’<sup>22</sup>

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18 Earlier in the book there had been mentioned several instances of the isomorphism of mathematical and natural-scientific procedures. See *Insight* 63, 335, and 339. This is not the same use of the term ‘isomorphism’ as appears beginning in chapter 14, though the two are not entirely unrelated.

19 Ibid. 424.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid. 424-25.

22 Ibid. 425. This deduction can be taught at a fairly introductory level to university undergraduates, without emphasizing that it really *is* a deduction. I have found repeatedly that when they get it, the whole purpose of what Lonergan is about becomes clear to them in a genuine ‘Aha!’ moment. It is the

The materials to be integrated by this unifying structure are obtained from the discoveries made by the common sense and science that have already been reoriented on the basis of one's affirmation of the basic positions on knowing, being, and objectivity (chapters 11-13).<sup>23</sup> But prior to this integration of reoriented common sense and science there occurs in chapter 15 the heuristic naming of the contents of experience, understanding, and judgment that parallel the unification of the knowing that consists of those three sets of operations:

‘Potency’ denotes the component of proportionate being to be known in fully explanatory knowledge by an intellectually patterned experience of the empirical residue.

‘Form’ denotes the component of proportionate being to be known, not by understanding the names of things, nor by understanding their relations to us, but by understanding them fully in their relations to one another.

‘Act’ denotes the component of proportionate being to be known by uttering the virtually unconditioned yes of reasonable judgment.<sup>24</sup>

The isomorphism as presented here is the basis of the claim found in the preface to *Insight* that ‘every statement in philosophy and metaphysics can be

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culminating moment arising out of their reflection on the basic positions of chapters 11, 12, and 13 of *Insight*: the positions, respectively, on knowing, being, and objectivity.

23 Part of the process of effectively teaching this material is to use examples from common sense and science that are familiar to the students.

24 Ibid. 457.

shown to imply statements regarding cognitional fact.’<sup>25</sup> It should be clear already from this claim that the possibilities of transposition cut in two directions: from philosophical and metaphysical statements to cognitional-theoretic statements, and from the latter to the former. Moreover, it should be clear as well from Lonergan’s statements thus far in chapter 14 that the notion of isomorphism reaches beyond the fact that experiencing, understanding, and judging are isomorphic with potency, form, and act. For experiencing, understanding, and judging are said to be just ‘the simplest’ of the ‘concrete and recurring structures in the knowing of the self-affirming subject.’<sup>26</sup> They are heuristic indications of varying types of acts performed and contents known at distinct levels. They mark qualitatively distinct sets of sublated and sublating operations in that knowing, and for that reason they have been designated metaphorically (for better or for worse) as distinct ‘levels’ of consciousness. But their contents are never known in science and common sense as ‘potency,’ ‘form,’ and ‘act.’ They are known as instances of the individuality of the empirical residue or of spatiotemporal continua or of conjunctions or of successions or of coincidental departures from schemes of recurrence (potency); or as instances of intelligible correlations or of terms and relations that fix one another (form); or as instances of the existence or occurrence of these intelligible forms (act). It is those instances, and not just the heuristic notions of potency, form, and act, that are isomorphic with operations at the levels of experience, understanding, and judgment.

Moreover, within each ‘level’ there will be a number of distinct operations, and if the principle of isomorphism has any general validity we may expect to find,

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25 Ibid. 5.

26 Ibid. 424-25.

at the least, a correspondence between knowing and known within the levels as well as between the distinct levels.

Moreover again, if not only cognitional acts are conscious,<sup>27</sup> if there are other conscious acts that do not fall within the limits of what Lonergan means by experience, understanding, and judgment, then we may expect the principle of isomorphism to have a wider relevance than would be supported by the relation of cognitional consciousness to the metaphysical elements. It is, after all, ‘every statement in philosophy and metaphysics’ that implies statements regarding cognitional fact. Clearly, philosophy is not limited to metaphysics.

Presumably, too, we may expect that the ‘set of secondary minor premises ... supplied by reoriented science and common sense’ will coalesce into an integrated view of things that will be able to find corresponding terms and relations in the knowing process through which the view has been attained. This philosophic worldview is in many respects still to be articulated. So is the metaphysics that *Insight* merely sketches when defining explicit metaphysics as the conception, affirmation, and implementation of the integral heuristic structure of proportionate being. Four heuristic structures are offered in *Insight* – classical, statistical, genetic, and dialectical – but they are only incipiently and, may we say, heuristically integrated with one another. We may expect further heuristic structures to emerge, and when they do metaphysics will develop. I think it may be claimed that *Method in Theology* offers a historical heuristic structure that is not provided in *Insight*, or at least a precision not found in the *Insight*’s treatment of interpretation and history. But these limitations on present achievement do not negate the potential fruitfulness of anticipating a rounded philosophic worldview that takes its stand on as thorough an exploration of ‘contemporary interiority’ as is possible at any given

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27 Ibid. 345.

time. Already there may be anticipated the state of affairs affirmed when *Method in Theology*'s affirmation is correctly understood that 'for every term and relation there will exist a corresponding element in intentional consciousness.'<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, if the principle of isomorphism should be extended beyond 'the isomorphism that obtains between the structure of knowing and the structure of the known'<sup>29</sup> as further 'levels' of consciousness are affirmed beyond those that constitute knowing, there occurs a vast expansion of possibilities, an expansion whose major premise is now the isomorphism that obtains between the structure of authentic subjectivity in its totality and the structure of what is intended by it, the structure of its 'real correlatives.' It is a fundamental mistake, I believe, to assume that these real correlatives, no matter what may be the level of consciousness, must be metaphysical elements. There are no metaphysical elements that correspond to the fourth and fifth levels of consciousness. But there are objective correlatives at both levels.

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28 Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 343. As Monsour will point out, Wilkins tendentiously and without evidence finds it necessary to his argument to insert the word 'metaphysical': 'for every [metaphysical] term and relation there will exist a corresponding element in intentional consciousness.' See Wilkins, 'Method and Metaphysics in Theology' 54. That is not what Lonergan says in *Method in Theology*, and it is not what he means. His meaning, rather, is illuminated and clarified by the passage with which I began this essay. Again, 'every statement in *philosophy and metaphysics* can be shown to imply statements regarding cognitional fact.' That statement was written before he ever raised the possibility of statements in theology as well as in philosophy (though he was most likely thinking of these too at the time).

29 Ibid. 424.

### 3 The Scale of Values

A first installment on the proposal that I am making here has to do with the isomorphism that I want to affirm and already have affirmed<sup>30</sup> between the five levels of consciousness proposed by Lonergan and the integral scale of values that he proposes in *Method in Theology* and that I have made one of the central sets of categories in my *Theology and the Dialectics of History*. Lonergan writes:

... we may distinguish vital, social, cultural, personal, and religious values in an ascending order. Vital values, such as health and strength, grace and vigor, normally are preferred to avoiding the work, privations, pains involved in acquiring, maintaining, restoring them. Social values, such as the good of order which conditions the vital values of the whole community, have to be preferred to the vital values of individual members of the community. Cultural values do not exist without the underpinning of vital and social values, but nonetheless they rank higher. Not on bread alone doth man live. Over and above mere living and operating, men have to find a meaning and value in their living and operating. It is the function of culture to discover, express, validate, criticize, correct, develop, improve such meaning and value. Personal value is the person in his self-transcendence, as loving and being loved, as originator of values in himself and in his milieu, as an inspiration and invitation to others to do likewise. Religious values, finally, are at the heart of the meaning and value of man's living and man's world.<sup>31</sup>

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30 See Robert M. Doran, *What Is Systematic Theology?* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005) 181, 190, 195.

31 Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 31-32.

The level of vital values corresponds to experience, the level of social values to understanding, the level of cultural values to judgment,<sup>32</sup> the level of personal values to decision, and the level of religious values to God's gift of love as constituting a new level that sublates and elevates all else.<sup>33</sup> The five levels together anticipate, have as their objective, the integral structure of the scale of values as constitutive of the human world. There are relations from below and from above among the levels of value, as there are among the levels of consciousness.<sup>34</sup> The scale of values provides the heuristic structure of the social-cultural objectification of the structure of authentic subjectivity. It is the

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32 See Bernard Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, vol. 10 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Robert M. Doran and Frederick E. Crowe (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993) 50: 'There is intellectual development, and there is reflective development. Intellectual development corresponds to civilization, reflective development to culture.' Among the functions of culture is *correcting* the meanings and values informing given ways of living.

33 On the complex question of a fifth level of consciousness, the definitive work to date has been done by Jeremy Blackwood. His dissertation, 'Love and Lonergan's Cognitional-Intentional Anthropology,' firmly establishes that Lonergan did indeed intend to affirm a fifth level. Anyone who wishes to deny that such a level exists is arguing not with Blackwood and not with me but with Lonergan. The dissertation may be found on [www.lonerganresource.com](http://www.lonerganresource.com), under Scholarly Works/Dissertations. It will be published in revised form by Marquette University Press with the title '*And Hope Does Not Disappoint*': *Love, Grace, and Subjectivity in the Work of Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S. J.*

34 See Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* 94-97

framework for working out the ‘desirable possibility’ of collective responsibility.<sup>35</sup> Its complete realization would be eschatological, something akin to the full realization of the reign of God in human affairs.

Here too, however, we are mentioning only one of ‘the simplest’ of the structures, in that it defines distinct levels of value as such. Within each level of the full intending of the scale of values, as within each level of consciousness, there are myriad correspondences of authentic and inauthentic intending with creative or distorted structural components in the objective correlatives of the intending. I have tried to specify a few of these in *Theology and the Dialectics of History*. Moral conversion in its fullness would be conversion to the integrity of the full scale of values. All that I wish to establish here is that there is an isomorphism not only of cognitional levels with metaphysical elements and of cognitional operations with the deliverances of the reoriented science and common sense that intellectual self-appropriation makes possible, but also of moral unfolding with the levels of value in Lonergan’s proposed scale of values. The full result is envisioned heuristically in the view of history proposed in *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, though this view is dependent upon the appropriation of yet another dimension of interiority besides intentional consciousness, a dimension that we will come to when we discuss the ‘more rudimentary elements’ to which I alluded above.

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35 See Bernard Lonergan, ‘Natural Right and Historical Mindedness,’ in *A Third Collection*, vol. 16 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Robert M. Doran and John D. Dadosky (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017) 163-64.



#### 4 The Immanent Constitution of Life in God

First, though, let me extend the application to the constitution of the fifth level in the scale of values itself. The range of self-transcendence and so of authenticity is constituted not only by the creative operations ‘from below’ but also by a movement ‘from above’ that begins with pure gift. Human intentionality moves from below beyond the presentations of the data of sense and of consciousness through inquiry to understanding, conceptualization, and formulation; it moves next from this whole second level through reflection to the affirmation of something real in true judgment; it moves again from knowledge of facts to moral self-transcendence in authentic judgments of value and decisions. But this capacity for self-transcendence becomes a consistent reality or actuality when one falls in love. And it is the *gift* of God’s love in particular that establishes one in the state of being in love without qualifications, restrictions, reservations, and that works ‘from above’ to heal and redeem.

There is the transformation of falling in love: the domestic love of the family; the human love of one’s tribe, one’s city, one’s country, mankind; the divine love that orientates man in his cosmos and expresses itself in his worship.

Where hatred only sees evil, love reveals values. At once it commands commitment and joyfully carries it out, no matter what the sacrifice involved.

Where hatred reinforces bias, love dissolves it, whether it be the bias of unconscious motivation, the bias of individual or group egoism, or the bias of omniscient, shortsighted common sense. Where hatred plods around in ever narrower vicious circles, love breaks the bonds of psychological and social determinisms with the conviction of faith and the power of hope.<sup>36</sup>

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36 Bernard Lonergan, ‘Healing and Creating in History,’ *A Third Collection* 101.

When the ‘we-consciousness’ that characterizes the so-called fifth level is constituted by divine love in addition to human love – and that can often happen without one’s knowing it – another dimension is at work, one that medieval theory called supernatural and that Lonergan in *Method in Theology* calls otherworldly. In *The Trinity in History*, vol. 1: *Missions and Processions*, I have begun (and only begun) to tease out ways of understanding what happens in this exchange in terms of relations with each of the three divine persons and so in terms of an isomorphism between the immanent constitution of our life in God – memory, faith, charity – on the one hand, and the triune God in whom one has one’s life – Father, Son, Holy Spirit – on the other: the triune God whose life is revealed to us and in which we participate through the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit that are identical with the immanent processions joined to created external terms.<sup>37</sup>

While the other affirmations that I have made in this paper are, I believe, more than hypothetical, at least to the extent that the categories employed are ‘built up from basic terms and relations that refer to transcultural components in human living and operation’<sup>38</sup> and so possess ‘exceptional validity,’<sup>39</sup> what I want to say about the isomorphism of life in God with the God in whom we have this life must remain hypothetical. We are in the realm of mystery. The Trinity itself, of course, is not a theological hypothesis, but any attempt to understand the mystery is inescapably and irretrievably hypothetical.

That having been said, there are hopeful signs in contemporary theology of an understanding, and consequently a renewed acceptance, of the real impetus

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37 On the participation of memory, faith, and charity in the divine relations, see

Doran, *The Trinity in History*, vol. 1: *Missions and Processions*, chapter 2.

38 Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 285.

39 Ibid.

behind the Augustinian and Thomist approaches to a hypothetical understanding of how there can be processions, relations, and really distinct persons in the one God. I am convinced that many of those who object to the so-called psychological analogy found in Aquinas's Trinitarian theology do not understand it. This indictment includes such prominent theologians as Karl Rahner, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and Joseph Ratzinger. But while Lonergan's interpretation of Aquinas's Trinitarian theology remains the most convincing I have seen,<sup>40</sup> his later work moves to a different and even more useful proposal regarding what is essentially the same structure as that found in Aquinas, but now transferred to a new register. What is different in the later proposal has to do with the analogue for the Father. In Lonergan's earlier Trinitarian systematics, which contains a fulsome interpretation of Aquinas, the analogue for the Father is the human act of understanding as this generates an inner word. Thus the Father is conceived as *Ipsum Intelligere*. And of course no theologian of whom I am aware is more familiar than Lonergan with either the human act of understanding or with the procession of inner words from understanding in human consciousness. The vision remains compelling. But more compelling still is the later proposal:

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

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40 See Bernard Lonergan, *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).

Now in God the origin is the Father, in the New Testament named *ho Theos*, who is identified with *agapē* (1 John 4.8, 4.16). Such love expresses itself in its Word, its Logos, its *verbum spirans amorem*, which is a judgment of value. The judgment of value is sincere, and so it grounds the Proceeding Love that is identified with the Holy Spirit.

There are then two processions that may be conceived in God; they are not unconscious processes but intellectually, rationally, morally conscious, as are judgments of value based on the evidence perceived by a lover, and the acts of loving grounded on judgments of value. The two processions ground four real relations of which three [paternity, filiation, and passive spiration] are really distinct from one another; and these three are not just relations as relations, and so modes of being, but also subsistent, and so not just paternity and filiation [and passive spiration] but also Father and Son [and Holy Spirit]. Finally, Father and Son and Spirit are eternal; their consciousness is not in time but timeless; their subjectivity is not becoming but ever itself; and each in its own distinct manner is subject of the infinite act that God is, the Father as originating love, the Son as judgment of value expressing that love, and the Spirit as originated loving.<sup>41</sup>

I have tried to take this movement one step further, by speaking of an analogy in the very Trinitarian structure of created grace itself. It is this structure that I think we can express hypothetically as isomorphic with the divine processions as we know these processions from the revelation that occurs with the missions. This is expressed in thesis 6 in *Missions and Processions*:

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41 Bernard Lonergan, 'Christology Today: Methodological Reflections,' in *A Third Collection* 91-92.

The Trinitarian structure of created grace provides a psychological analogy for understanding Trinitarian life, an analogy whose structure is isomorphic with the analogies suggested by Augustine, Aquinas, and Lonergan. Thus there is established an analogy for understanding Trinitarian processions that obtains in the supernatural order itself. This analogy joins Augustine in positing *memoria* as the first step, where *memoria* is the retrospective appropriation of the condition in which one finds oneself gifted by unconditional love. *Memoria* and the judgment of value (faith) that follows from it as *verbum spirans amorem* participate in active spiration. The charity that flows from them participates in passive spiration. Together, these form the special basic relations of a systematic theology.<sup>42</sup>

This proposal differs from Lonergan's later analogy by another shift in the analogue for the Father. 'As Lonergan went from *Ipsium Intelligere* to *Agapē* as the dynamic state of being in love, so I am suggesting a shift from the dynamic state of

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42 Robert M. Doran, *Missions and Processions* 33-34. Note that I am suggesting an isomorphism not simply of the structure of this analogy with Augustinian, Thomist, and Lonerganian analogies, but also of the created graces of sanctifying grace, here understood as *memoria* and faith together, with divine active spiration, and of charity with divine passive spiration – and so of the structure of created grace with the structure of Trinitarian life. This isomorphism is possible because, or if, it is correct to say that sanctifying grace and charity are *participations* in, respectively, active and passive spiration, as Lonergan says they are; see *The Triune God: Systematics* 470-73, the so-called four-point hypothesis.

being in love ... to a principle of love understood precisely as lovableness recollected in something like Augustine's *memoria*.<sup>43</sup>

In concluding the chapter in which the proposal is presented, I expand on the statement that the relations that constitute the structure of *memoria*-and-faith actively breathing charity

... would constitute the 'special basic relations' that for some reason are left out of the following central methodological passage in *Method in Theology*:  
'[G]eneral basic terms name conscious and intentional operations. General basic relations name elements in the dynamic structure linking operations and generating states. Special basic terms name God's gift of his love and Christian witness. Derived terms and relations name the objects known in operations and correlative to states' [Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 343]. The special basic relations are the created participations in the divine relations of active and passive spiration, through being on the receiving end of God's love in *gratia gratum faciens* and loving God in return in charity.<sup>44</sup>

## 5 Psychic Conversion

The 'more rudimentary elements' in cognitional and existential process that constitute what Lonergan would later call the realm of elemental meaning are of

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43 Ibid. 36. Lonergan makes lovableness the characteristic of divine active spiration that enables it to be the principle of proceeding love in God, that is, of the Holy Spirit. See *ibid.* 37.

44 Ibid. 39. The quotation from Lonergan is from the same page as contains the disputed passage 'for every term and relation there will exist a corresponding element in intentional consciousness.'

extraordinary significance in the three dimensions of conversion that Lonergan explicitly acknowledges in *Method in Theology*: intellectual, moral, and religious. It is in these elements that the cognitional subject will find the link between conditioned and conditions and the fulfilment of conditions that will enable the reflective grasp of the virtually unconditioned.<sup>45</sup> It is here too that the Ignatian second mode of election or decision that Lonergan articulates in his development of the dynamics of the fourth level in *Method in Theology* finds its own evidence for judgments of value in self-transcendent affectivity.<sup>46</sup> And it is here that the subject called by God experiences the mystery of love and awe as it ‘remains within subjectivity as a vector, an undertow, a fateful call to a dreaded holiness’<sup>47</sup> before the word in its myriad forms helps one understand what really is going on. The process that I have referred to as psychic conversion transforms the censorship

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45 See Lonergan, *Insight* 306.

46 The fourth level emerges as a really distinct level in the account of deliberation and decision provided in *Method in Theology*. It is not clearly distinct in the account found in *Insight*. I have argued elsewhere and at some length that both accounts are valid, each for a different ‘time’ in the subject, in accord with Ignatius Loyola’s times of election. The account in *Insight* corresponds to Ignatius’s third time, and that found in *Method in Theology* to Ignatius’s second and first times. For the most developed presentation of this position, see Robert M. Doran, ‘Essays in Systematic Theology 19: Ignatian Themes in the Thought of Bernard Lonergan: Revisiting a Topic That Deserves Further Reflection,’ on [www.lonerganresource.com](http://www.lonerganresource.com), under Scholarly Works/Books/Essays in Systematic Theology: An E-book. The paper was originally published in *Lonergan Workshop* 19, ed. Fred Lawrence (Boston College, 2006) 83-106.

47 Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 113.

that we exercise over what is allowed into elemental conscious process from a repressive to a constructive functioning. When the functioning of the censor exercised by imagination and intelligence in collaboration represses the movement from neural demands to conscious imaginal experience, the further advance from empirical to intelligent consciousness is distorted by the presence of the ‘wrong’ images, and the further reversals of reasonable and existential consciousness to elemental process that are required for grasping the virtually unconditioned in the realms of both fact and value are short-circuited.

The distortions of elemental process are multiform, but I find myself becoming ever more convinced that Lonergan’s judgment is correct that *ressentiment* as conceived by Max Scheler, especially as Scheler’s account is briefly reformulated by Lonergan himself, names the most notable aberration of the affective component in elemental process. Lonergan frequently makes the views of others better than they really were, the mark of an authentic interpreter, and this is true again in his account of *ressentiment* ‘according to Scheler’:

... *ressentiment* is a re-feeling of a specific clash with someone else’s value-qualities. The someone else is one’s superior physically or intellectually or morally or spiritually. The re-feeling is not active or aggressive but extends over time, even a lifetime. It is a feeling of hostility, anger, indignation that is neither repudiated nor directly expressed. What it attacks is the value-quality that the superior person possessed and the inferior not only lacked but also feels unequal to acquiring. The attack amounts to a continuous belittling of the value in question, and it can extend to hatred and even violence against those that possess that value-quality. But perhaps its worst feature is that its rejection of one value involves a distortion of the whole scale of values and that this distortion can spread through a whole social class, a whole people, a whole



epoch. So the analysis of resentment can turn out to be a tool of ethical, social, and historical criticism.<sup>48</sup>

To this evaluation of the notion of resentment, however, I would recommend there be added René Girard's account of mimetic rivalry. Together these analyses of the intersubjective components of elemental process contribute to an enormously helpful understanding of the mechanisms that would hide from the subject the links between conditioned judgments of fact and value and the underlying conditions whose fulfilment makes possible the grasp of the virtually unconditioned and so true judgments.

Moreover, it is in this elemental realm that far more occurs of ultimate theological significance than is normally admitted. Lonergan seems to be incipiently on to this in some cautions in his thesis on the notion of satisfaction. These cautions are to the effect that aberrations in some theological areas begin when theologians transpose from symbolic apprehensions, which retain elemental significance as long as they remain symbolic, to the categories of logical apprehension.<sup>49</sup> The transformative principle that Lonergan finds operative throughout the entire work of redemption has, in my view, perhaps its most vital role to play precisely in the realm of elemental process and symbolic apprehension. Nowhere is this more the case, in my estimation, than in the apprehension of the law of the cross, the transformation of evil into good, that is the entire meaning of redemption. Almost every attempt to express this transformation in conceptual

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48 Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 33.

49 In the volume of Lonergan's *Collected Works* devoted to the redemption, this caution will be found in the section of thesis 16 of *De Verbo incarnato* called 'Preliminary note 11: The Symbolic Mentality.'

systematic terms has failed. Lonergan's own expression in his thesis 17, on the law of the cross, comes as close to hitting it off as anything I have encountered, and yet even he is still committed as well to redeeming from the tradition a category, satisfaction, that was thought out in an age in which law was the only human science. I confess I cannot follow him there, even as I embrace with gratitude what he does in thesis 17 and hope to open it further by bringing it into contact with Girardian mimetic theory.<sup>50</sup>

The entire field of the theology of revelation is another area ripe for development in terms of the contribution that can be made to systematic theological understanding from an apprehension of the dynamics of the elemental symbolic process that precedes conceptualization and retains a permanent elemental meaning that will never be adequately captured in the movement to systematic articulation. In general, here I am simply pointing to an element in the structure of the unfolding of human authenticity whose further articulation as a dimension of contemporary interiority could make a wonderful contribution to the development of a systematic theology based on the principle that 'for every term and relation there will exist a corresponding element in intentional consciousness.'<sup>51</sup> In this area of elemental meaning, opened by what I have called psychic conversion, there remains a great deal of foundational work yet to be done.

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50 See Robert M. Doran, 'The Non-violent Cross: Lonergan and Girard on Redemption,' *Theological Studies* 71 (2010) 46-61; also found now on [www.lonerganresource.com](http://www.lonerganresource.com) as Essay 53 in *Essays in Systematic Theology*.

51 Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 343.