

Enlarging the Horizon of Transposition: Grace Considered from the Perspective of Lonergan's Worldview

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Introduction and Terms

In this brief presentation I want to make a case for enlarging the horizon of transposition of grace into methodical theology so that it coincides with Lonergan's worldview. Before I can make this case, however, I need to define what I mean by transposition, by horizon, by methodical theology, and by Lonergan's worldview.

First, what do I mean by transposition? Lonergan described a transposition to be "a restatement of an earlier position in a new and broader context."¹ He pointed out, however, that transposition is not simply a logical extension, nor is it necessarily a term-by-term and relation-by-relation isomorphic translation from the old to the new context.² Rather, the continuity that a transposition maintains with the original position is both analogous and dialectical. It is analogous insofar as the structure of the new context differs from that of the old. It is dialectical in distinguishing between the authentic and the unauthentic in both contexts.³

By horizon of transposition I mean the bounded range of interests and scope of knowledge that informs the transposition. Such a horizon must be sufficiently large to include knowledge of both the old and new contexts. Because it includes the contexts of transposition, a large-enough horizon of transposition must also include a critical awareness of human development, of culture, and of history.

¹ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, "Horizons and Transpositions," in *Philosophical and Theological Papers: 1965–1980*, ed. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 17 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 410.

² Ibid.

³ Lonergan, "The Scope of Renewal," in *Philosophical and Theological Papers: 1965–1980*, 293.

Much of Lonergan's work was directed towards the transposition of Roman Catholic theology from the theoretical stage of meaning characteristic of scholastic theology into a theology capable of meeting the scientific, philosophical, and critical historical exigencies of his times. To this end he developed a critical philosophy of interiority grounded in intentionality analysis⁴ and transcendental method.⁵ Because a theology informed by interiority is necessarily informed by transcendental method, Lonergan referred to such a theology as methodical.⁶

The methodical theology envisioned by Lonergan is one in which the general theological categories are derived from intentionality analysis while the special theological categories are based on the experience of grace.⁷ Although Lonergan made suggestions about what the special theological categories should entail, his only contribution to explicating the special theological categories was to describe the transposition of sanctifying grace that would serve as their basis.⁸ Whereas scholastic theology described sanctifying grace in metaphysical terms to be an entitative habit rooted in the essence of the soul, Lonergan described the same reality transposed into interiority to be the gift of "God's love flooding our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us (Rom. 5, 5)."⁹ He described the experience of grace as that of being in love in an unrestricted manner.¹⁰

⁴ In Lonergan's words, intentionality analysis, "distinguishes four levels of conscious and intentional operations, where each successive level sublates previous levels by going beyond them, by setting up a higher principle, by introducing new operations, and by preserving the integrity of previous levels, while extending enormously their range and their significance." Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (1971; repr., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 340. Citations are to the 1994 edition.

⁵ Lonergan understood transcendental method to be "a basic pattern of operations employed in every cognitional enterprise." *Ibid.*, 4. Thus, an understanding of transcendental method flows from intentionality analysis.

⁶ See *ibid.*, 288.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 289. The foundational reality in a methodical theology is religious conversion. See Lonergan, *ibid.*, 267. But religious conversion is brought about through grace. See *ibid.*, 107.

⁸ See *ibid.*, 285–93 at 289, 292; 343.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 105.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 105–6.

Problem and Present Context of Transposition of Grace

The “problem” if you want to call it that (I prefer to think of it as a catalyst), is that Lonergan’s transposition of sanctifying grace into interiority, while seminal, leaves a number of unanswered questions, including: How do we describe the conscious experience of being in love in an unrestricted manner? What is the nature of this experience on each level of consciousness? How is the transposition of grace into interiority informed by Lonergan’s own scholastic theology? Does such a transposition preserve real distinctions in scholastic theology, such as that between sanctifying grace and the habit of charity? Broader questions include: How does grace affect human persons as individuals and as related? and, How does grace serve God’s purpose for all of creation?

Because of these unanswered questions, it is not surprising that the transposition of grace has been a subject of discussion among Lonergan scholars. Since at least 1993 this discussion has addressed a variety of topics including the phenomenology of the experience of grace, the relationship between grace and a fifth level in consciousness, the nature of the transposed distinction between sanctifying grace and the habit of charity, the implications of Lonergan’s four-point hypothesis for the transposition of grace,¹¹ and the process of transposition itself.¹² Lonergan scholars have not arrived at a consensus on these topics.

¹¹ Lonergan’s four-point hypothesis correlates the secondary act of existence of the incarnation, sanctifying grace, the habit of charity, and the light of glory to the four real divine relations of paternity, active spiration, passive spiration, and sonship. See Lonergan, Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, trans. Michael G. Shields from *De Deo Trino: Pars systematica* (1964), ed. Robert M. Doran and H. Daniel Monsour, Collected works of Bernard Lonergan 12 (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2007), 470–72.

¹² The discussion was inaugurated in 1993 by Robert M. Doran in Doran, “Consciousness and Grace,” *METHOD: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 11, no. 1 (1998): 51–75. Contributions to the discussion have included: Michael Vertin, “Lonergan on Consciousness: Is There a Fifth Level?” *METHOD: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 12, no. 1 (1994): 1–36; Patrick H. Byrne, “Consciousness: Levels, Sublations, and the Subject as Subject,” *METHOD: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 12, no. 1 (1994): 131–50; Doran, “Revisiting ‘Consciousness and Grace,’” *METHOD: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 13, no. 2 (1995): 151–59; Tad Dunne, “Being in Love,” *METHOD: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 13, no. 2 (1995): 161–76; Vertin, “Lonergan’s Metaphysics of Value and Love,” *Lonergan Workshop* 13 (1997): 189–219; Doran, “The Starting Point of Systematic Theology,” *Theological Studies* 67 (2006):

While in the 1990s the discussion of transposition of grace into interiority focused primarily on the experience of grace in individual consciousness, this discussion has broadened to include the communal, cultural, and historical existential “field” of human persons. This is especially apparent in Father Doran’s proposed doctrine of social grace,¹³ in his unified field structure for systematic theology that integrates Lonergan’s four-point hypothesis with a theory of history,¹⁴ in discussions focusing on the fifth-level in consciousness as that on which love occurs,¹⁵ in Jeremy Wilkins’s proposal that we consider grace within a heuristic structure informed by Lonergan’s and Piaget’s notions of development that necessarily include the larger existential context of subjects,¹⁶ and in Dadosky’s proposal of a fourth stage of meaning characterized by the turn to the Other.¹⁷ I take these developments to be an indication that the ‘wind is blowing’ in the direction of enlarging the horizon of transposition of grace. I also take these developments to be supportive of my proposal that the horizon of transposition of grace from theoretical theology to methodical theology must include Lonergan’s worldview.

750–76; Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer, “Sanctifying Grace in a ‘Methodical Theology,’” *Theological Studies* 68 (2007): 52–76; Charles Hefling, “*Quaestio Disputata* on the (Economic) Trinity: An Argument in Conversation with Robert Doran,” *Theological Studies* 68 (2007): 642–60; Niel J. Ormerod, “Two Points or four? – Rahner and Lonergan on Trinity, Incarnation, Grace, and Beatific Vision,” *Theological Studies* 68 (2007): 661–73; David M. Coffey, “*Quaestio Disputata*: Response to Neil Ormerod, and Beyond,” *Theological Studies* 68 (2007): 900–15; Jeremy W. Blackwood, “Sanctifying Grace, Elevation, and the Fifth Level of Consciousness: Further Developments within Lonergan Scholarship” (paper presented at West Coast Methods Institute, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, CA, April 2009). I am deeply grateful to Jeremy Blackwood for sharing this paper with me.

¹³ See, for example, Doran, “The Starting Point of Systematic Theology,” 773–74; Doran, “Envisioning a Systematic Theology,” *Lonergan Workshop* 20 (2008): 118–19.

¹⁴ Robert M. Doran, “Envisioning a Systematic Theology,” 109.

¹⁵ See note 10 above.

¹⁶ Jeremy D. Wilkins, “Grace and Growth: Aquinas, Lonergan, and the Problematic of Habitual Grace,” *Theological Studies* (forthcoming). I am deeply grateful to Jeremy Wilkins for sharing this paper with me.

¹⁷ Dadosky, “Midwiving the Fourth Stage of Meaning: Lonergan and Doran,” in *Meaning and History in Systematic Theology: Essays in Honor of Robert M. Doran, SJ*, ed. John D. Dadosky (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2009), 78; See also Dadosky, “Is There a Fourth Stage of meaning?” *The Heythrop Journal* LI (2010): 768–80.

Lonerger's Worldview

Simply, by Lonergan's worldview I mean his operative horizon. Obviously, any attempt to describe Lonergan's worldview can be nothing more than an approximation. Among those elements of Lonergan's worldview that I think are necessary for a complete transposition of grace into interiority I include Lonergan's understanding of God as source and end of the universe, his related understandings of world order and world process; his understanding of the role of grace in healing and elevating individuals and in bringing about the fulfillment of the universe according to God's plan, his understanding of scholastic theology including its theologians, operative culture, and sources; his view of the state of Catholic theology and operative culture in the church prior to, during, and after the Second Vatican Council; and his vast understanding of the history, trends, scholarship, cultural processes, and exigencies of his 'times,' and his understanding of interiority and of transcendental method. All of these elements are part of the unified and interdependent whole that was Lonergan's horizon. It should not be surprising that Lonergan's horizon continued to develop throughout his long career. I will focus on two key aspects of Lonergan's worldview, namely, his notions of world order informed by vertical finality and of world process informed by emergent probability. As I understand them, these two distinct but interdependent notions inform all the other aspects of Lonergan's worldview.

World Order and Vertical Finality

Lonerger's understanding of world order was arguably influenced by the world order envisioned by Thomas Aquinas. As did Aquinas, Lonergan held that the universe was a hierarchically-arranged but unified whole ordained and directed via finality to both proportionate

ends and absolute good in order to manifest God's glory.¹⁸ However, whereas Aquinas conceived the universe in terms of fixed, immutable, classical laws, essences, and causes (although he certainly recognized the existence of contingency), Lonergan, influenced by modern conceptions of science and evolution, understood the universe to be dynamically and concretely evolving under the impulse of a dynamism that he termed vertical finality.

Vertical finality provided for Lonergan the key to explaining the relationship of lower entities to higher entities in an evolving, dynamic, concrete universe. In addition to the Aristotelian notion of instrumental subordination, Lonergan's notion of vertical finality included a participative relationship of subordination that explains in his words, "how lower entities can bring about and participate in the constitution of the higher."¹⁹ Of course Lonergan understood that such participation is made possible by God who is the cause of the whole universe.²⁰ So central was vertical finality to Lonergan's understanding of the universe that he described it as "the very idea of our hierarchic universe."²¹ Key to Lonergan's notion of vertical finality was his understanding that the attainment of its ends depends on the fertility of concrete plurality.²² The idea that vertical finality is the dynamism that underlies and accompanies all concrete evolutionary processes and that its fertility lies in concrete plurality was central to Lonergan's understanding of all processes of development. Such processes are operative not only in history

¹⁸ For a summary of Thomas Aquinas's understanding of world order the reader is referred to Oliva Blanchette, *The Perfection of the Universe According to Aquinas: A Teleological Cosmology* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 1–19. For Lonergan's understanding of world order see Lonergan, "Finality, Love, Marriage," in *Collection*, 2nd ed. rev. and aug., ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 4 (New York: Herder and Herder, and London: Darton, 1967; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 18–23. Citations are to the 1993 edition.²⁰ Lonergan, "Mission and the Spirit," in *A Third Collection*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe, S.J. (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 23–27; See also J. Michael Stebbins, *The Divine Initiative: Grace, World-Order, and Human Freedom in the Early Writings of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

¹⁹ Lonergan, "Mission and the Spirit," 24.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Lonergan, "Finality, Love, Marriage," 22.

²² Lonergan wrote, "the vertical end is had only by escaping the limitation of isolated essence through the fertility of concrete plurality." Ibid.

writ large, but also in individual and communal human development, including development under grace.

In addition to playing the key role in Lonergan's understandings of world order and world process, Lonergan's notion of vertical finality played a key role in his understanding of interiority. According to his intentionality analysis on which his metaphysics of interiority is based, human persons develop and are directed to self-transcendence through an innate dynamism constituted by vertical finality.²³ Lonergan referred to this dynamism in *Insight* as the unrestricted desire to know being²⁴ and later, in "Mission and the Spirit," as "passionateness of being."²⁵ Just as the fertility of vertical finality in the universe lies in concrete plurality, so the actualization of passionateness of being in individuals as it heads for the realization of self-transcendence in love requires community.²⁶ Directed to love, passionateness of being is ultimately directed to the reception of God's self-communication as grace in community. Lonergan emphasized that it is not as isolated individuals that people receive grace, but rather that grace is received in and directed to "a divine solidarity in grace."²⁷ It is precisely in concrete plurality that human persons have, in Lonergan's words, "the obediential potency to receive the communication of God himself."²⁸ Lonergan held that God's solution to the problem of evil in the world will be realized through divine solidarity in grace.²⁹

²³ Lonergan, "Mission and the Spirit," 29.

²⁴ See Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, rev. and aug. repr., ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 3 (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1957; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 667. Citations that follow are to the 1990 edition.

²⁵ Lonergan, "Mission and the Spirit," 29.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

²⁷ Lonergan, "Finality, Love, Marriage," 27.

²⁸ In Lonergan's words, "a concrete plurality of rational beings have the obediential potency to receive the communication of God himself." *Ibid.*, 20.

²⁹ See Lonergan, *Insight*, 740-51; Lonergan, "Mission and the Spirit," 30.

World Process and Emergent Probability

In order to account for the fact that the actually-occurring concrete processes of world process occur in a somewhat random or contingent fashion Lonergan introduced the notion of emergent probability. Emergent probability explains how in any process of development actually-occurring schemes of development condition the probability of emergence of future possible schemes.³⁰ In Lonergan's understanding, vertical finality conditioned by emergent probability is the operator of all processes of development.³¹

Grace Informed by Lonergan's Worldview

As I see it, Lonergan's notion of vertical finality conditioned by emergent probability unifies and informs all the other aspects of his worldview. In particular it informs an understanding that the healing and elevating that grace brings about in individuals serves the ends of vertical finality. Grace serves the ends of vertical finality by equipping individuals for self-sacrificing love in collaboration with others to become the fertility of concrete plurality able to receive God's self-communication and to cooperate with God in helping to bring about God's plan for the world.³² It is not too audacious to claim that in Lonergan's worldview, the

³⁰ Lonergan, *Insight*, 149. Lonergan wrote, "[T]he dynamism of universal process is directed, not to a generically, specifically, or individually determinate goal, but to whatever becomes determinate through the process itself in its effectively probable realization of its possibilities." Ibid., 475. The fact that vertical finality is governed by emergent probability implies that the ends of vertical finality may or may not be attained. Lonergan wrote, "Vertical finality is to its end not as inevitable, but as a possibility. Its ends . . . may or may not be attained." Lonergan, "Mission and the Spirit," 26.

³¹ See Lonergan, *Insight*, 490.

³² See *ibid.*, 741, 744–50. Lonergan says in a number of places that God's grace is received by persons in community. For example, he says in "Finality, Love, Marriage," "the ascent of the soul towards God is not a merely private affair but rather a personal function of an objective common movement in [the] body of Christ . . ." Lonergan, "Finality, Love, Marriage," 27. In *Method* Lonergan writes, "For being-in-love is properly itself, not in the isolated individual, but only in a plurality of persons that disclose their love to one another." Lonergan, *Method*, 283. About the role of grace in bringing about the ends of finality, Lonergan writes, "This knowing and loving [of grace] is directed both to the ultimate end, which is the good itself by essence, and to the proximate end, which is the general good of order, the kingdom of God, the body of Christ, the Church." Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, 511. Lonergan wrote this prior to Vatican II. After Vatican II he explicitly states that the kingdom of God and the Church are not to be identified. My source for this information is a communication from Robert Doran of March 6, 2011.

individual, communal, and cosmic dimensions of grace are related as part of a unified whole via vertical finality.

Warrants for Enlarging the Horizon of Transposition of Grace to Include Lonergan's Worldview

The unity of Lonergan's worldview, in which vertical finality serves to link the natural order and the supernatural order under grace,³³ provides, I believe, a warrant or compelling reason to enlarge the horizon of transposition of grace to include his worldview. Since time does not permit elaboration of other arguments or warrants for enlarging the horizon of transposition of grace to include Lonergan's worldview, I will simply allude to two such possible arguments. One argument could be made, for example, on the basis of a consideration of the totality of Lonergan's life's work as itself a transposition in which the transposition of grace from theoretical to methodical theology is related integrally to the whole.³⁴ A second argument could be made from within intentionality analysis itself, specifically, from Lonergan's analysis of intentional acts which implies that one's consciousness is never solely of oneself as isolated, but of oneself-as-related and as part-of.³⁵ Lonergan referred to consciousness of being related as

³³ Lonergan saw the supernatural order to be "a harmonious continuation of the present order of the universe." Lonergan, *Insight*, 718. For a complete account of the relationship between Lonergan's notion of grace and his worldview see Stebbins, *The Divine Initiative*.

³⁴ Matthew Lamb argues that the whole of Lonergan's life work was that of transposition. Matthew Lamb, "Lonergan's Transpositions of Augustine and Aquinas," in *The Importance of Insight: Essays in Honour of Michael Vertin*, ed. John J. Liptay Jr. and David S. Liptay (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 5. See also Matthew Lamb, "Historicity and Eternity," *Lonergan Workshop* 10 (1994): 187. Support for considering the totality of Lonergan's life work as a transposition can be found in the phrase he adopted early in his career from the encyclical *Aeterni Patris* of Pope Leo XIII to express the purpose of his own efforts, "*vetera novis augere et perficere*" (to add to and perfect the old by means of the new). This purpose is consistent with what Lonergan later referred to as genuine transposition. See Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe, Robert M. Doran, Collected Words of Bernard Lonergan 2 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 222, and Lonergan, *Insight*, 769. Specifically, Lonergan's intentionality analysis itself can be considered to be a transposition from medieval faculty psychology to Lonergan's contemporary context informed by what he referred to as modern science, modern philosophy in its turn to the subject, and "History as *Wissenschaft*." See Lonergan, "Horizons and Transpositions," 428–30; Lonergan, *Method*, 343; Lonergan, "Aquinas Today: Tradition and Innovation," in *A Third Collection*, 41–47.

³⁵ In Lonergan's analysis, an intentional element describes the totality of an act of intending. It consists of three aspects: the act of intending, the intended object, and the intending subject. By means of intentional acts subjects not only become aware of their intended objects, but also become present to themselves in consciousness,

“common consciousness.”³⁶ I believe that it is in common consciousness that the experience of grace as that of being-in-love unrestrictedly is to be sought and located.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I maintain that a full transposition of grace into interiority requires that we take Lonergan’s worldview into account. In turn, taking Lonergan’s worldview into account imposes on us the requirement to take the teleological thrust of grace in realizing God’s purpose for all of humanity and creation into consideration. This requirement further mandates that we include the developmental processes through which the teleological thrust of grace is realized, such as individual, communal, cultural, and historical development occurring under vertical finality and emergent probability.

Signs of the Times in Transposition of Grace

In his notes from a lecture given by Father Doran during the 2003-2004 academic year, John Dadosky ascribes to Father Doran the following: “[T]here is emerging a new period of Lonergan studies, where the major themes are community, dialogue, otherness, mediation, and plurality.”³⁷

I believe that we are witnessing just such a movement in the transposition of grace into interiority in which the horizon appears to be broadening to include these themes in a trajectory headed towards taking Lonergan’s worldview more completely into consideration.

not as the consequence of introspection or reflection, but as concomitant with, yet distinct from, the presence of objects to the subject. Lonergan, “The Mediation of Christ in Prayer,” in *Philosophical and Theological Papers: 1958–64*, ed. Robert C. Croken, Frederick E. Crowe, and Robert M. Doran, *Collect Works of Bernard Lonergan* 6 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 169–70. Through his analysis of what he refers to as “intentional summations,” Lonergan argued that the totality of objects of intentional acts become part of one’s subjective experience and therefore constitute who one is. More specifically, Lonergan described how the summation of subjects into “the intersubjectivity of community, into ‘we,’” constitutes the relational or communal reality of the subject. *Ibid.*, 170.

³⁶ Lonergan, “Finality, Love, Marriage,” 35.

³⁷ John D. Dadosky, “Midwiving the Fourth Stage of Meaning: Lonergan and Doran,” in *Meaning and History in Systematic theology: Essays in Honor of Robert m. Doran, SJ*, ed. John D. Dadosky (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2009), 71.