

Essays in Systematic Theology 30: Discernment and Lonergan's Fourth Level of Consciousness¹

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1 The Problem

In a paper presented at the thirty-fifth annual convention of the Jesuit Philosophical Association in 1973, Bernard Lonergan wrote:

In *Insight* the good was the intelligent and reasonable. In *Method* the good is a distinct notion. It is intended in questions for deliberation: Is this worthwhile? Is it truly or only apparently good? It is aspired to in the intentional response of feeling to values. It is known in judgments of value made by a virtuous or authentic person with a good conscience. It is brought about by deciding and living up to one's decisions. Just as intelligence sublates sense, just as reasonableness sublates intelligence, so deliberation sublates and thereby unifies knowing and feeling.²

Some commentators and interpreters take this passage to mean that the difference that it describes signifies as well a correction on Lonergan's part of the position expressed in chapter 18 of *Insight* regarding the good and decision, so that in Lonergan's mind the position of *Method in Theology* should replace that found in *Insight*. This interpretation may be justified. Certainly, there is nothing in this brief passage that would argue against it, and the context of the section of the paper in which these comments appear seems to favor it, since this paragraph appears in the midst of comments on other

1 [First published in *Gregorianum* 89 (2008) 790-902, revised 2011.]

2 Bernard Lonergan, 'Insight Revisited,' in *A Second Collection*, ed. William F.J. Ryan, S.J., and Bernard J. Tyrrell, S.J. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996) 277.

matters in *Insight* on which Lonergan had changed his mind: the usage of the words ‘mystery’ and ‘myth’ in chapter 17, the more concrete expression given to hermeneutical and historical methods in *Method in Theology* as contrasted with the section on interpretation in the same chapter 17, and the context for raising the questions of God’s existence and nature in chapter 19. But it could also be argued that, just as these other developments are not radical changes from *Insight* but contextual nuances and more concrete expressions, so too it would be rash for us, whether as interpreters of Lonergan or as people who are used to relying on Lonergan in a more existential way, to discard the presentation of *Insight* too quickly in favor of an exclusive attachment to the portrayal of these crucial matters in *Method in Theology*.

This caution is only accentuated for me as a theologian and as an editor of Lonergan’s Collected Works, for it is obvious from the newly published volume 12 in that series, *The Triune God: Systematics*, that the psychological analogy for an imperfect, obscure, but fruitful understanding of the divine processions employs the same notion regarding the procession of decision from intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation as is found in chapter 18 of *Insight*. The dynamics of that procession presented in *The Triune God: Systematics* are identical with the dynamics that are spelled out in greater detail in *Insight*. The language has changed, since *De Deo Trino: Pars systematica*, published in 1964, which provided the basic text for volume 12 in the Collected Works, uses the expression *iudicium valoris*, a judgment of value, as the analogue for the divine Word, and *Insight* does not speak of judgments of value or value judgments until the discussion of belief in chapter 20. Chapter 18 of *Insight* refers to a ‘judgment’ that results from ‘practical reflection,’ a judgment concerning the possibility of courses of action, a judgment that might be called practical, even though the expression ‘practical judgment’ also does not appear there. *Divinarum personarum conceptio analogica*, the first version (1957 and 1959) of what became *De Deo Trino: Pars systematica*, speaks of *iudicium practicum seu iudicium valoris*, practical judgment or judgment of value, thus marking

the transition in Lonergan's use of language on these points. But whatever the language, the dynamic structure of the *processiones operati*, the processions of act from act, that in both of these Latin works gives the proper analogy for understanding the trinitarian processions is precisely the structure found in chapter 18 of *Insight* regarding the procession of a judgment (inner word) from intelligent grasp and practical reflection, and the procession of decision from both intelligent and reasonable grasp and practical judgment considered together. Thus, to abandon the presentation of decision in *Insight* in favor of the account in *Method* would entail a change in the trinitarian analogy.

Now, it is true of course that in his later years Lonergan did present a somewhat different analogy for the trinitarian processions, and it is an analogy that can more easily be reconciled with *Method*'s presentation of the good than with *Insight*'s. But it is clear to me from teaching these theological materials and from attempting to write about them that, no matter how preferable Lonergan's later trinitarian analogy may be, in that it evokes the existential relationship of ourselves to the persons of the Trinity in a way that is not found in the earlier analogy, still the later analogy cannot be successfully communicated to students and readers except through the presentation of the dynamics of the earlier analogy, and so through the dynamics of good decision as these are set forth in quite intricate detail in chapter 18 of *Insight*.

I wrestled with these issues, however, before I tried to teach trinitarian theology or to write about the Trinity, and it was in the context of those earlier attempts to reconcile the two positions that I came to the position that I wish to express here, one that I continue to hold. The problem was raised for me because I found a validity in each of the accounts of good decision, that found in *Insight* and that presented in *Method*. I could point to instances in my own life in which, as far as I could tell, I had made decisions that followed the pattern that Lonergan spells out in *Insight*, and other instances in which the emphases of *Method* were more prominent. I did not think these differences minimized the validity of the decisions, no matter in which way they were made. Moreover, in

attempting as a spiritual director to help others with issues of discernment and decision, I had witnessed instances of each of these methods of decision being employed. And it was this context of discernment that gave me what I think might be the clue to reconciling the two accounts.

2 A Possible Solution

2.1 Lonergan's Account in *Insight* and St Ignatius Loyola's Third Time of Election

It was in St Ignatius Loyola's depiction in his *Spiritual Exercises* of 'Three times, in each of which a sound and good election may be made,'³ that I found the key to reconciling the two accounts of decision found in Lonergan's writings. In brief, the method one uses in making a decision depends on the interior state in which one finds oneself when one is faced with having to decide. The three 'times' that Ignatius depicts are all valid, but only one of them will be proper depending on the interior conditions in which one finds oneself, depending on what Heidegger perhaps would call one's *Befindlichkeit*. I quote from Ignatius:

The first time is when God our Lord so moves and attracts the will, that, without doubt or the power of doubting, such a devoted soul follows what has been pointed out to it, as St. Paul and St. Matthew did when they followed Christ our Lord.

The second time is when much light and knowledge is obtained by experiencing consolations and desolations, and by experience of the discernment of various spirits.

The third time is one of tranquility: when one considers, first, for what man is born, viz., to praise God our Lord, and to save his soul; and when, desiring this, he

3 *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola*, trans. Henry Keane, S.J. (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1952) 61.

chooses as the means to this end a kind or state of life within the bounds of the Church, in order that he may thereby be helped to serve God our Lord, and to save his soul. I said a time of tranquility; that is, when the soul is not agitated by divers spirits, but enjoys the use of its natural powers freely and quietly.⁴

The saint then adds a sentence that would seem to suggest that the third time is the least to be expected, perhaps even the least desirable in the context of the *Spiritual Exercises*, where it is to be hoped that one would indeed be moved affectively in different directions, inclining now this way and now that, until one settles on the course that leads to the peace of a good conscience, to the harmony that indicates the direction, to the affective self-transcendence that marks a good decision. Ignatius writes: 'If an election is not made in the first and second times, there are the two following methods of making it in this third time.'⁵

It is important to my thesis here to study these two methods. For each is a matter, in Lonergan's words, of being intelligent and reasonable, so that it may be said that in this way of election the good is indeed the intelligent and reasonable, as it is in *Insight*. Briefly, in the first method one weighs in the light of the service of God the advantages and disadvantages of the various alternatives to see 'to which side reason most inclines; and thus following the weightier motions of reason, and not any sensual ones, I must come to a decision about the matter proposed.'⁶ And in the second method one imagines oneself counseling another person regarding the same issues and asks oneself, What would you advise this other person to do? Or one imagines oneself at the point of death or considers oneself at the day of judgment, and one asks oneself, What would you at that

4 Ibid. 61-62, §§175-77.

5 Ibid. 62, §178.

6 Ibid. 63, §182.

time wish you had done? Again, because one is not experiencing the pulls and counterpulls of various affective movements, the decision is made as a result of, an outcome of, or a procession from, reasonable judgment based on a grasp of evidence. This is precisely the structure of decision presented in chapter 18 of *Insight* and employed in *The Triune God: Systematics* in the analogy for the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Word. The language is different. Lonergan's presentation is in the realm of theory and interiority, Ignatius's in the mode of common sense. But in either case, to quote Lonergan, 'the good is the intelligent and reasonable,' or, in the language of *Insight*, 'the value is the good as the possible object of rational choice.'⁷

Lonergan's use of the word 'value' in *Insight* leads us to ask whether there is anything in *Insight* that corresponds to *Method*'s notion of value. And obviously there is, for the expression 'notion of value' is the title of a section (1.3) of chapter 18 in *Insight*. But there the notion of value is 'the dynamic exigence of rational consciousness for self-consistency' between knowing and doing.⁸ But, we may ask, is this not also the notion of value that is operative in Ignatius's depiction of what he calls the third time of election? In Ignatius's words, one questions 'to which side reason most inclines,' and once that question has been answered, one experiences an exigence to act accordingly. The question, To which side does reason most incline? would be answered in the acts that *Insight* refers to as 'the practical insight' (section 2.3) and 'practical reflection' (section 2.4) leading to the judgment concerning the reasonable possibility of a certain course of action. The exigence for self-consistency would issue in the decision.

7 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) 624.

8 *Ibid.* 625.

Considerations such as these led me to propose, as I have in several places, that chapter 18 of *Insight* may be regarded as presenting in philosophical terms the general form of Ignatius's third time of election, a general form in which what is operative is the notion of value considered precisely as the exigence of rational consciousness for self-consistency between knowing and doing.

2.2 Lonergan's Account in *Method* and *St Ignatius Loyola's Second Time of Election*

To turn now to *Method in Theology*, while Lonergan in '*Insight Revisited*' mentions several respects in which the position of *Method* differs from that of *Insight*, the difference that is most obvious, the one that was most surprising for many of us to hear coming from Lonergan in the late 1960s, the one that, unless I am mistaken, has caused the most difficulty for some interpreters of Lonergan, has to do with the role of feelings in the process that leads to decision. As has been noted many times the treatment of these matters in *Insight* explicitly and deliberately bypasses any mention of feelings. Feelings are coupled with sentiments, and the definite impression is given that an ethical position that would make them central would be hedonistic or sentimentalist, correlating the meaning of the term 'good' solely with the 'unquestioning and unquestionable level of experience,'⁹ that is, the first level of consciousness, empirical consciousness. How different it sounded to many of us in the late 1960s when we heard Lonergan say what he also writes in chapter 2 of *Method in Theology*: 'Intermediate between judgments of fact and judgments of value lie apprehensions of value. Such apprehensions are given in

9 Just before this quotation, Lonergan writes, '... objects of desire are manifold, [and] this manifold, so far from being isolated, is part and parcel of the total manifold, and ... it is in the total manifold that concretely and effectively the potential good resides. Now it is to this first step that the hedonist or sentimentalist must object.'

feelings.’¹⁰ Or again, the good ‘is aspired to in the intentional response of feeling to values.’¹¹ Feeling is obviously no longer relegated in this discussion to the unquestioning and unquestionable first level of experience. Intentional feeling now

gives intentional consciousness its mass, momentum, drive, power. Without these feelings our knowing and deciding would be paper thin. Because of our feelings, our desires and our fears, our hope or despair, our joys and sorrows, our enthusiasm and indignation, our esteem and contempt, our trust and distrust, our love and hatred, our tenderness and wrath, our admiration, veneration, reverence, our dread, horror, terror, we are oriented massively and dynamically in a world mediated by meaning. We have feelings about other persons, we feel for them, we feel with them. We have feelings about our respective situations, about the past, about the future, about evils to be lamented or remedied, about the good that can, might, must be accomplished.¹²

These are precisely the feelings that occur, among other places in human intentional dynamics, in that intermediate zone between judgments of fact and judgments of value, the feelings in which possible values and disvalues are apprehended.

Now if one has already noticed a correspondence between the presentation of *Insight* and the third moment or time of election in Ignatius’s *Spiritual Exercises*, then such statements as these might lead quite spontaneously to the question of whether there is not a similar correspondence between the presentation of *Method in Theology* and Ignatius’s second time of decision. In the second time, again, ‘much light and knowledge is obtained by experiencing consolations and desolations, and by experience of the

10 Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003) 37.

11 Lonergan, ‘*Insight Revisited*’ 277.

12 Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 30-31.

discernment of various spirits.’ Elsewhere Lonergan correlates Ignatius’s consolations and desolations with the ‘pulls and counterpulls’ of which Eric Voegelin speaks when he writes both of the classic experience of reason and of the gospel’s symbolizations of existence, the gentle pull of the golden cord that, when acceded to, brings peace, and the more or less violent counterpull that, when followed, leaves conscience ill at ease.¹³

Lonergan’s discussion of feelings in *Method* is no less dramatic, even if his language is different. In the section on feelings as a component of the human good, we are told of the distinction of intentional and nonintentional feelings, and within the field of intentional feelings of the distinction between those that regard the satisfying or dissatisfying and those that respond to values. The latter lead to a discussion or proposal of what in fact is a normative scale of values, where the criterion of the scale seems to be based on the degree of self-transcendence to which one is carried by the value to which one is responding. Several pages on the development of such feelings are followed by one paragraph on aberrations, the most notable of which would seem to be what has been called resentment, which according to Max Scheler is ‘the re-feeling of a specific clash with someone else’s value-qualities,’ where ‘the someone else is one’s superior physically or intellectually or morally or spiritually.’¹⁴ Later in the chapter a similar discussion speaks of how we can ‘respond with the stirring of our very being when we glimpse the possibility or the actuality of moral self-transcendence,’ but also of the possibility of coming to hate the truly good and to love the really evil.¹⁵ Are we not in the same territory as that to which Ignatius is referring when he speaks of the second time of

13 See Lonergan, ‘Theology as Praxis,’ in *A Third Collection*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985) 190, 192, 194, 196, and especially 201 n. 48, where the link is made with Ignatius.

14 Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 33.

15 *Ibid.* 38, 40.

election, where, again, ‘much light and knowledge is obtained by experiencing consolations and desolations, and by experience of the discernment of various spirits?’ Is not the method of making good decisions in the pattern of thought presented in *Method in Theology* a matter of discerning the pulls and counterpulls of affectivity, to see where they lead and to discriminate those that lead to what is good from those whose result is either not good at all or at best ambiguous? Can we not rather easily correlate statements from Ignatius about discernment with statements from Lonergan about deliberation? Is the meaning of ‘deliberation’ in *Method* not very close to the meaning of ‘discernment’ in Ignatius? ‘Deliberation,’ Lonergan writes in the quotation with which we began, ‘sublates and thereby unifies knowing and feeling,’ the knowing that takes place in judgments of fact and the feeling in which possible values are apprehended. Is not deliberation often a matter of discriminating the vagaries of affective attractions and repulsions toward and away from possible values and disvalues? May we then say, finally, that, as *Insight* presented something like the general form of Ignatius’s third time of election, so chapter 2 of *Method in Theology* presents something like the general form of Ignatius’s second time? That, at least, is my hypothesis, and if it is true, then the account presented in *Insight* is not to be jettisoned and replaced by that offered in *Method*, no more than Ignatius’s third time is to be regarded as so unreliable that one would artificially attempt to make a decision in the second time even though one’s interior state was not appropriate for such a method of election.

3 Fuller Statement of the Proposed Solution

Let me review, then, in a bit fuller detail the position at which I have arrived.

In the position of *Insight* the process of decision adds to the cognitional process of experience, understanding, and judgment only the further element of free choice. If there is a fourth level of consciousness in *Insight* – and we all know that there is no explicit

mention of a fourth level – it would consist only of this further element of free choice. In the process one assembles the data, one has a practical insight into what is to be done, one grasps that the evidence supports the practical insight, one judges that this is to be done, and under the dynamic influence of the notion of value urging consistency between knowing and doing, one freely chooses to do it. Again, the good is the intelligent and reasonable.

In the position of *Method in Theology*, on the other hand, the apprehension of values in feelings that is intermediate between judgments of fact and judgments of value is, for the most part and in the general case, an apprehension of possible value, of what might possibly be the good thing to do or the good choice to make. The apprehension of value in feelings thus stands to the judgment of value as direct insight stands to the judgment of fact. Questions for deliberation follow upon the apprehension of value in feelings just as questions for reflection follow upon direct insight. These questions are prompted by the transcendental notion of value, which now assumes the form not so much of an exigence for self-consistency between knowing and doing but rather of an unrestricted orientation to ‘know and do, not just what pleases us, but what truly is good, worth while,’ and so to ‘be principles of benevolence and beneficence, capable of genuine collaboration and of true love.’¹⁶ The judgment of value that knows the good proceeds from a discernment that bears on these feelings in which possible values are apprehended, and it determines whether the possible values that have been apprehended are really good or only apparently good. That discernment of feelings can, I think, easily be related to St Ignatius’s rules for the discernment of spirits, which, as they are applied especially in the second week of the *Exercises*, are relevant in part to making a decision in what he calls the second time. At some point in the process of deliberation or decision, one reaches the point at which further questions dry up, just as happens in the process of

16 Ibid. 35.

reflection leading to judgment of fact. It is at that point that a judgment of value is made: This is good, This is better than that. This is to be done. When these judgments of value are made by a virtuous or authentic person with a good conscience, or even better by a person in love in an unqualified fashion, then what is good is clearly known. The good is then brought about by deciding and living up to one's decisions or, again, manifesting the exigence for self-consistency between knowing and doing. And all of this, from the apprehension of possible values in feelings through the discernment of these feelings and through the conclusion of the process of deliberation in the judgment of value to the decision, belongs to the fourth level of consciousness. There is a much more ample fourth level of consciousness in this way of making decisions than there is in the way proposed in *Insight*. Thus, there are significant differences between the two presentations of decision, differences that affect the very fourth level itself, which in one mode of making decisions is quite minimal and in the other quite extensive.

On this showing, then, Lonergan's two presentations of the dynamics of arriving at a good decision correspond to the third (*Insight*) and second (*Method*) times of making a good election in Ignatius's presentation in the *Spiritual Exercises*.

Let me spell this out a bit more in the following four points.

First, the times of decision that Ignatius proposes are exhaustive. From the standpoint of the *Spiritual Exercises*, either God has moved one in such a way that one has no doubts as to what one is to do, and then one is in the first time, or God has not so moved one, and so one has questions, and then one is in either the second or the third time. In the latter case, either one is tranquil or one is agitated by various pulls and counterpulls. If one is agitated by various pulls and counterpulls, one is in the second time. One is not free to exercise one's natural powers of intelligence and reason but must rely on various guidelines for discerning affective indications of what is good and what is not. If one is not agitated, one is in the third time, and then one is free to employ one's natural powers to arrive at judgments of value and decisions that, in Lonergan's terms,

will acknowledge particular goods and goods of order as genuine values precisely because they are possible objects of rational choice.

Second, there is a complementarity between the second and third times in Ignatius, and between the two presentations in Lonergan. That is, the judgment of value and the decision that one arrives at in Ignatius's second time, by discerning pulls and counterpulls, must be able to be adjudicated as well by the criteria of intelligence, reason, and responsibility that are explicitly appealed to in the third time. And the judgments of value and decisions that are arrived at in the third time must produce the same 'peace of a good conscience' on the part of a virtuous person that would result from the proper discernment of affective pulls and counterpulls in the second time.

Third, then, Lonergan's account of judgments of value and decision in *Insight* presents principal points of the general form of St Ignatius's third time of making decisions. This account explicitly prescind from any discussion of affective involvements, and so it at least implicitly presupposes that the person making a decision is not agitated in such a way that one is prevented from employing one's natural powers of experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding. In this account one's decisions are good decisions if in fact they are harmonious with what one knows to be true and good. Moral integrity is a matter of generating decisions and consequent actions that are consistent with what one knows, that is, that are consistent with the inner words of judgments of fact and judgments of value that one has sufficient reason to hold to be true. And if this is the case, then Lonergan's account in *Insight* would remain as permanently valid as Ignatius's account of the third time of election. It just would not be the only account, because it names only one of the times of making a good decision. Nor is this mode of decision in fact independent of grace and the gift of God's love. For while it is by employing one's natural powers of experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding that one arrives at the decision, still the consistent fidelity to the norms of those natural operations that is required if one is to be a person who makes good decisions is itself a

function of God's gift of God's love. The decision-making processes that Lonergan outlines in chapter 18 of *Insight* are no more independent of the presence of grace than are the decisions that St Ignatius speaks about when he writes of the third time of election. It is the consolation of God's love that leaves one tranquil enough to exercise one's own attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, and responsibility in a consistent manner.

Fourth, the presentation that is found in *Method in Theology* is relevant, not to Ignatius's third time but to his second time of election. For here it is self-transcendent affectivity, affectivity that matches the unrestricted reach of the transcendental notion of value, the affectivity of a person in love in an unqualified fashion, that provides the criteria for the decision. Which course of action reflects, embodies, incarnates the self-transcendent love that matches the reach of the transcendental notion of value? The answer to that question gives the indication as to the direction in which one is to go as one heads towards a judgment of value and a consequent decision. All of this is confirmed by the considerations that Ignatius places in the second week of the *Exercises* precisely in the context of heading toward the election, for he proposes meditations and considerations on what he calls the Two Standards, the Three Classes of Persons, and the Three Degrees of Humility, each of which beckons one in a very radical fashion to the total response of self-transcendent love.

What about St Ignatius's 'first time' of making an election? What Ignatius says, again, is the following: 'The first time is when God our Lord so moves and attracts the will, that, without doubt or the power of doubting, such a devoted soul follows what has been pointed out to it, as St Paul and St Matthew did when they followed Christ our Lord.'¹⁷

17 *Spiritual Exercises* §175.

The key to the relation between what Ignatius says about this first time and what Lonergan says in both *Insight* and *Method* is in the words ‘without doubt or the power of doubting.’ In Lonergan’s terms, there are no further questions, and one knows that this is the case. It is different in Ignatius’s third and second times, as it is in Lonergan’s accounts in both books. In Ignatius’s third time, as in Lonergan’s account in *Insight*, one ‘turn[s] over and reason[s] on everything with regard to the matter proposed, to see to what side reason most inclines,’¹⁸ before one reaches the judgment that, if one is faithful to the exigence for self-consistency, issues in decision. In Ignatius’s second time, as in Lonergan’s account in *Method in Theology*, one weighs the pulls and counterpulls of affective inclination to discern where they lead, since the apprehension that occurs in feelings is only of what might possibly be good. As Ignatius writes, ‘We ought to be very careful to watch the course of such thoughts; and if the beginning, middle, and end are all good, leading to all that is good, this is a mark of the good angel; but if the thoughts suggested end in something bad or distracting, or less good than that which the soul had determined to follow, or if they weaken, disturb, or disquiet the soul, taking away the peace, the tranquility, and the quiet it enjoyed before, it is a clear sign that they proceed from the bad spirit, the enemy of our advancement and of our eternal salvation.’¹⁹ That for Ignatius is discernment, and, I propose, it is intimately connected to what Lonergan calls deliberation. But in the first time, there are no such further relevant questions; there is no discernment at least in the sense of deliberation; rather, in the first time, the dynamic state of being in love and its word of value judgment are so dominant that the loving decisions and actions flow spontaneously forth from them in a way that admits no doubt as to where they come from or whose life is being reflected in them: ‘I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me.’ These moments are probably not as rare as might be

18 Ibid. §182.

19 Ibid. §333.

supposed from Ignatius's examples of Paul and Matthew. I suspect most of us can identify privileged moments in our own lives when we have made decisions under the power and vigor of being in love in this fashion. The consolation without any preceding cause that is manifest in such events has a wider relevance than moments of decision. But even when it is operative in the first time of decision, it is important to keep in mind what Ignatius reminds us of at the very conclusion of the rules for the discernment of spirits.

... the spiritual person to whom God gives this consolation ought with great watchfulness and care to examine and to distinguish the exact period of the actual consolation from the period which follows it, in which the soul continues fervent and feels the remains of the Divine favour and consolation lately received; for in this second period it often happens that by its own habits, and in consequence of its conceptions and judgments, whether by the suggestion of the good or evil spirit, it makes various resolves and plans, which are not inspired immediately by God our Lord; and hence it is necessary that they be thoroughly well examined before they receive entire credit and are carried out into effect.²⁰

In other words, even basic options made under the movement of God to which Ignatius appeals in speaking of the first time may have to be followed by either the practical reflection of Ignatius's third time or of Lonergan's *Insight*, or by the deliberation and discernment of Ignatius's second time or of Lonergan's *Method in Theology*. '... human authenticity,' Lonergan writes, 'is never some pure and serene and secure possession. It is ever a withdrawal from unauthenticity, and every successful withdrawal only brings to light the need for still further withdrawals. Our advance in understanding is also the elimination of oversights and misunderstandings. Our advance in truth is also the correction of mistakes and errors. Our moral development is through repentance for our

²⁰ Ibid. § 336.

sins. Genuine religion is discovered and realized by redemption from the many traps of religious aberration. So we are bid to watch and pray, to make our way in fear and trembling. And it is the greatest saints that proclaim themselves the greatest sinners, though their sins seem slight indeed to less holy folk that lack their discernment and their love.²¹

4 A Concluding Suggestion

This quotation mentions ‘the many traps of religious aberration,’ and Ignatius’s rules for discernment address precisely this problem. May I suggest that Max Scheler’s analysis of resentment and René Girard’s development of similar ideas in his theory of mimetic rivalry and violence represent major contributions to an understanding of these traps? It is in this context that I would appeal to the possible relevance of what I have called psychic conversion. The feelings in which possible values are apprehended can be very complicated affairs, and if Lonergan is correct in saying that resentment is perhaps the most notable aberration of such feeling, if Girard is correct in developing resentment into mimetic rivalry and deviated transcendence, religion that is intimately linked to violence, then some kind of education of the human spirit to the devices of the affective flow, which is precisely what I’m after in speaking of psychic conversion, may prove to be central to this entire process of making decisions in Ignatius’s second time or according to the method proposed in Lonergan’s *Method in Theology*.

I have gone on long enough. What I have said may have veered too much into the theological for this philosophical context, but further development of these same ideas would only take me further into theology. For the next step in my own thinking on these matters has to do with the alternative accounts of the psychological analogy for the

21 Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 110.

trinitarian processions rooted in Lonergan's two accounts of the emergence of authentic decision.