

METHOD

Journal of Lonergan Studies, n.s.

Volume 2

Number 2

Fall 2011

Mark D. Morelli
Editor

Patrick H. Byrne
Editor

Thomas McPartland
Editor

Regina Knox
Managing Editor

Kerry Cronin
Business Editor

CONTENTS

- Robert M. Doran, SJ* 131 Social Grace
- Jeremy W. Blackwood* 143 Sanctifying Grace, Elevation, and the Fifth Level of Consciousness
- Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer* 163 Living in the Artistry of God: Bernard Lonergan's Interpretation of Thomist Volitional Theory
- Phillip McShane* 187 The Hypothesis of a Non-Accidental Human Participation in the Divine Active Spiration
- Michael Vertin* 203 The Notion of a Lonergan Enterprise
- James B. Gerrie* 227 Review of William F. Sullivan, *Eyes of the Heart: Knowing the Good in the Euthanasia Debate*

SOCIAL GRACE

Robert M. Doran, SJ

Marquette University

I HAVE LONG REGARDED Bernard Lonergan's 1977 address to the American Catholic Philosophical Association, "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness," as one of his finest papers. It expresses as well as anything he wrote just what his work was really all about. Moreover, it opens upon possible developments of that work.

On a more personal note, reading "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness" always takes me back to chapter 7 of *Insight*. My reading of that chapter was the beginning of my committed involvement with Lonergan's work. Both writings attempt the articulation of the intelligibility of "a single object that can gain collective attention,"¹ an intelligibility that can be articulated even though the situations that embody it are as a whole "commonly ... neither foreseen nor intended" by most people affected by them.² In chapter 7 of *Insight* this single object is, in the words of the title of the chapter, "Common Sense as Object," while in "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness" it is "collective responsibility," the coalescence of "the manifold of isolated responsibilities" into the unfolding of a history that flows from a total and dialectical source of meaning.³ In each case the issue is the relation between a subjective field and at least a portion of what would play in Lonergan's thought something of the role that objective *Geist* plays in Hegel's. Thus chapter 6 of *Insight* is called "Common Sense and Its Subject" and chapter 7 "Common Sense as Object," but "common sense as object" means at least partly the objectification in culture and society of the subjective field introduced in chapter 6; again, in "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness," the question is how "the issues that individuals have to deal with in their own

1 Bernard Lonergan, "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness," *A Third Collection*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985) 176.

2 *Ibid.* 169.

3 *Ibid.* 176.

minds and hearts" become 'writ large' in the dialectic of history.⁴ These are essentially the same topics. They are major topics. They must be addressed, and Lonergan has given us some of the tools to do just that.

Now the interest that began for me in reading chapter 7 of *Insight* and that gained precision from the presentation in "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness" of the plateaus on which that "single object" unfolds⁵ became, in some manner whose details can probably never be traced, the inspiration behind much of what I tried to do in *Theology and the Dialectics of History*. In my ongoing work, I am revisiting basic points of that work, and I find that theology elevates "collective responsibility," in the concrete dispensation that is ours, into something like "social and cultural grace." By this term I mean the objectification, the being writ large in the overarching dialectic of history, of God's entry into human affairs in the divine love that floods our inmost hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us and in the revelation of that love in Christ Jesus. The issue is the historical effects of the divine missions. What difference does it make to the dialectical processes of human history that there is a universal offer of what Christians call the Holy Spirit? What difference does it make to the same dialectic that the mission of the Son is among other things a revelation in incarnate and linguistic meaning of that universal offer? Here again, there are a subjective and an objective obverse and reverse. It is as though there are several manners in which to express the correlative subjective fields and objectifications: in one version they are "Common Sense and Its Subject" and "Common Sense as Object"; in another they are "the issues that individuals have to deal with in their own minds and hearts" and the coalescence of their negotiations of those issues into the dialectic of history; and in the present effort they are the reality that is given to many individuals and in fact that is offered to all, a reality that Catholic theology understands as participation in divine, that is, Trinitarian life, and that good Catholic systematic theology differentiates precisely in its Trinitarian form, and the coalescence of those individual gifts into a single object that can gain collective attention, an object that we might call the social objectification of grace, or in shorthand social grace, or in biblical terms the reign of God in human history.

4 Ibid.

5 The plateaus of 'Natural Right and Historical Mindedness' are the stages of meaning in *Method in Theology*, but their function as objectifications of the "single object that can gain collective attention" is much clearer in "Natural Right." See Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (latest printing, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006) 85-99.