The ‘Experience of Grace’ in the Theologies of Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan

Author: L. Matthew Petillo

Persistent link: http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2234

This work is posted on eScholarship@BC, Boston College University Libraries.

Boston College Electronic Thesis or Dissertation, 2009

Copyright is held by the author, with all rights reserved, unless otherwise noted.
THE ‘EXPERIENCE OF GRACE’ IN THE THEOLOGIES OF
KARL RAHNER AND BERNARD LONERGAN

[a dissertation]

L. MATTHEW PETILLO

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

May 18, 2009
THE ‘EXPERIENCE OF GRACE’ IN THE THEOLOGIES OF
KARL RAHNER AND BERNARD LONERGAN

by
L. Matthew Petillo
Advisor: Frederick Lawrence

Abstract

The first chapter begins by delineating Lonergan’s philosophy of development. It then applies this philosophy to a range of literature on grace and discerns, in the historical data, a basic line of intellectual progress. For this reason, this chapter implements a genetic method. More specifically, the chapter proposes an explanatory framework for understanding the contemporary transposition of scholastic metaphysics. Special attention is placed on the notion of grace as experience in relation to the evolution of theology as a science. The first chapter implements a genetic method to chart the developments in the history of the theology of grace. The last section of that chapter sketches the basic contours of a development that enabled a transposition from the second to the third stage of meaning—a development that made possible a description of grace in terms of consciousness. The second chapter addresses the question of grace and consciousness in the context of Lonergan’s thought. In this chapter, I bring to light the complexities and challenges of identifying and describing grace as a datum of human experience. I also attempt to offer the Lonergan scholar some guidance by developing a set of normative criteria that will assist him in navigating these complexities and surmounting these challenges. The chapter is not an exercise in foundational theology but is written from a dialectical and methodological viewpoint. The dialectical and
methodological work of the second chapter will prepare for the task of the third chapter. Chapter three compares Rahner’s and Lonergan’s theologies of grace; it focuses on a comparison of Lonergan’s notion of ‘being-in-love unrestrictedly’ and Rahner’s notion of the ‘supernatural existential’ in order to clarify their respective positions and to demonstrate an affinity in their writings on grace. Chapter four uses Rahner’s and Lonergan’s account of grace in terms of experience, developed in chapter three, to work out a theology of religion that responds to the challenges posed by post-modernism. My thesis in chapter four is that Rahner’s and Lonergan’s theologies of grace can ground the notion of a common consciousness of grace and take seriously the claim of a genuine variety of religious experiences.
Table of Contents

I. The Experience of Grace and Its Intellectual Heritage: a Genetic Analysis

A. Summary of the Thesis 1
B. State of the Question 2
C. Grounding the Notion of Development 8
C.1 Questions as Source and Limitation of Understanding 12
C.2 The Differentiation of Human Consciousness: Widening the Scope of Relevant Questions 14
C.3 Nicaea: a Model of Development in Theology 19
C.4 Post-Philosophical Thinking and Systematic Development 26
D. The Scholastic Transition 30
D.1 Concerns, Questions, Methods 31
D.2 Conversion and Charity 35
D.3 Charity and Perseverance 37
D.4 Healing and Elevating Grace 42
D.5 Operative and Cooperative Grace 45
E. The Contemporary Transition: a New Scientific Ideal 48
E.1 Transcendental Thomism: the Shift from Soul to Subject 51
E.2 Excursus on Transcendental Thomism and Kant 56
E.3 Grace as Experience and Its Consequences for Theology 57

II. From the Second to the Third Stage of Meaning: The Problem of Transposition in the Thought of Bernard Lonergan

A. The Problem in General Terms 62
B. Synopsis of the Conversation 63
C. The Question of ‘Transposition’ 75
D. The Methodological Starting Point 79
E. Answering the Questions 86
F. Inferring a Set of Normative Criteria for Transposition 90
G. A Critique of Six Theological Opinions 95

III. Constructing a Rahner-Lonergan Dialogue

A. Stages of Grace 114
B. Created and Uncreated Grace 118
C. Grace and Nature 122
D. Grace as Ontological Change 128
E. Being-in-Love Unrestrictedly and the Supernatural Existential 129
F. Being-in-Love Unrestrictedly in *Method in Theology* 135
G. Being-in-Love Unrestrictedly in Other Published Works 140
H. The Limitations and Misappropriations of Scholastic Theology 143
I. Some Interpreters of Lonergan on Being-in-Love Unrestrictedly 148
J. The Experience of Grace as *Orientation* 154
K. The Experience of Grace as *Basic* Orientation 155
L. The Experience of Grace as *Conscious* Orientation 158
M. The Experience of Grace as Intimate Presence of Mystery 159
N. The Experience of Grace as *Affective* Orientation 163
O. The Experience of Grace as Basic and Affective Orientation: a Transposition of Sanctifying Grace as Operative 166

IV. The Universal Experience of Grace and the Challenges of Post-Modernism

A. Rahner’s and Lonergan’s Universalist Theology of Religion 170
B. Unity as Implication of the Universalist Position  173
C. The Philosophical Challenges of Post-Liberal Theology: the Priority of Language  176
D. The Challenges of Post-Modernism: What about the Other?  179
E. The Problem of a Theology of Religion from a Post-Modern Perspective  181
F. The Solution of Mark Heim: a Mitigated Universalism  182
G. The Solution of Rahner and Lonergan: Transcending the Either/Or Disjunction  184
H. The Experience of Grace: the Domain of the Subject-as-Subject  184
I. The Complexity of Religious Experience: a Universalism with Space for the Other  188
J. Is There a Concept of Grace in the Buddhist Tradition?  194
K. Christian and Buddhist Descriptions of Religious Consciousness  199
K.1 The Experience of Grace and Nirvana  200
K.2 The Simultaneity of Grace and Sin  200
K.3 The Experience of Union with the Absolute  202
K.4 The Experience of Joy  203
Chapter I
The Experience of Grace and its Intellectual Heritage:
A Genetic Analysis

The chapter will begin by delineating Lonergan’s philosophy of development. It will then apply this philosophy to a range of literature on grace in order to discern, in the historical data, a basic line of intellectual progress. For this reason, this chapter will implement a *genetic* method. More specifically, the chapter will propose an explanatory framework for understanding the contemporary transposition of scholastic metaphysics. Special attention will be placed on the notion of grace as experience in relation to the evolution of theology as a science.

A. Summary of the Thesis

There are two major watersheds in the history of the theology of grace. The first of these occurred during the thirteenth century when the collaborative efforts of scholastic thinkers yielded a theorem of the supernatural. The second occurred during the twentieth century when theologians such as Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan, in what was no less than a kind of Copernican revolution, transposed this medieval theology of grace from the abstract and object-based framework of scholastic ontology to the phenomenological¹ and subject-based context of interior experience. These two shifts mark integral moments in the history of Christian reflections on grace.

In some sense, the theology of grace had its dawn in the mind of Augustine.² Therefore, any account of the development of the concept of grace requires a

¹ The meaning of the term ‘phenomenology’ is only analogous to the way it is understood in the works of Husserl, Heidegger, Levinas, and even Marion. This will be made clear in the following chapter.
² While ‘grace’ is mentioned in the Scriptures, Augustine made ‘grace’ a distinct topic of consideration. His procedure involved collating the data of Revelation on grace and attempting to understand its meaning in light of the various questions and challenges of his day.
consideration of Augustinian theology. Since theoretical differentiation was only partial in Augustine, his theology of grace remained limited. But what was inchoate in the meditations of Augustine came to fruition in the thought of Aquinas; and so while Augustine worked out a position of grace and liberty to which the scholastics were indebted, the metaphysical perspective achieved by Aquinas’ theology of grace transcended the limitations of Augustinian speculation. In a similar fashion, the viewpoint attained by Rahner and Lonergan reflected an even further development that transcended the restrictions of medieval scientia. My contention is that the interior differentiation of Christian consciousness, by which Rahner and Lonergan made explicit an ‘experience of grace,’ marks an explanatory breakthrough of at least equal magnitude to the theoretical advance of Aquinas. In terms of theological progress, the theorem of the supernatural stands to the Augustinian theology of grace as an experiential account of grace stands to the theorem of the supernatural. This essay will compare, in brief, the transition from Augustine to Aquinas\(^3\) and the transition from Aquinas to Lonergan and Rahner in order to demonstrate an analogy of proportion, and thus, to establish the insights of Transcendental Thomism as part of a cumulative series of achievements in Catholic theology.

**B. The State of the Question**

The idea of ‘an experience of grace,’ though endorsed by transcendental Thomistic thinkers, has raised red flags in the minds of magisterial authorities. In one of

\(^3\) Of course, I would be remiss if I failed to mention the efforts of Anselm, Bonaventure, Albert, Phillip the Chancellor, and others, all of whom were instrumental in the development of the Thomist theology of grace. But my purpose here is not to provide a history of the development of the theology of grace but to contrast selected moments in the history of that development in order to prove the limitations of the former and the progress of the latter.
the more recent versions of the Catechism, the following statement was issued regarding
‘grace’ and ‘experience:’ “since it belongs to the supernatural order, grace escapes our
experience and cannot be known except by faith.” Aside from the official and relatively
recent catechetical teaching that, at least ostensibly, rejects the idea of an ‘experience of
grace,’ there are also large sectors of Catholic theologians who fail to recognize its
legitimacy. While the document and its exponents, quite correctly, intend to preserve the
supernatural character of grace, the exclusion of grace from consciousness has, in recent
years, elicited reproach for reflecting an excessive abstractness and perhaps a certain
extrinsicism that fails to meet the demands of the personalist turn in twentieth century
theology. The so called “personalist turn,” as part of the overall pastoral reorientation of
Catholic consciousness, was carried out more fully and explicitly under the auspices of
Pope John XXIII as a means of reinvigorating a piety enervated by the overwhelming and
pervasive sense of the absence of God in modern culture. Though precipitated by the
scientific revolution and disseminated by those whom Schleiermacher called “the
cultured despisers of religion,” the sense of divine absence—the feeling that God was an
absentee father—was exacerbated during the twentieth century by the sudden and
unpredictable eruption of war in 1914 and, most poignantly, by the epic monstrosities of
Auschwitz nearly three decades later. By the mid 1940s, Christian piety, in the minds
and hearts of the faithful, had become deflated by the felt disconnect and even polarity
between, on the one hand, Church doctrine, which spoke so eloquently of divine love,
and, on the other, the abysmal realities of human life. The conversation, which was
Vatican II, emerged as the event in which the people of God mounted a response to this
crisis of spiritual irrelevance. As a pastoral response, its innovations and achievements

came not in the formation of a new set of doctrines but in a range of theological insights
that grounded a new *communication* of doctrines. In the opinions of the council
members, this new way of conveying the doctrines allowed the faithful to rediscover the
Biblical sense of “Abba” and “Emmanuel” which was, as Heidegger would phrase it,
“covered” over by the language that was generated in the medieval enterprise of onto-
theology. But, in light of this palpable and enduring need, there is still resistance to
expressing the truth of grace, which deals with the most intimate level of divine self-
communication, in the language of personal “experience.” There exists a need, then, to
articulate a differentiated perspective from which one can see that the transition from a
Scholastic to a contemporary theology of grace does not secularize, reduce, or in any
way, compromise the truth of Catholic doctrine, but continues a line of intellectual
progress moving from Augustine through Aquinas.

But why the insistence that grace “escapes our experience and cannot be known
except by faith”? In other words, why is the Church hesitant to work out the full
implications of the revolutionary insights of Vatican II? Firstly, the insistence that grace
lies beyond the limits of human experience became important as a strategic ploy to
counter the “certain knowledge of salvation” asserted by the reformers. In other words,
there is a concern that if Catholics admit that grace can be verified in human experience,
a concession is being made to the belief that personal salvation can be known with
certainty. Secondly, the exclusion of grace from experience, in more recent times, has
served the critical function of safeguarding the ‘supernatural’ from the reductionistic
propensities of a post-modern hermeneutic of suspicion. Some fear that expressing grace
in the language of human experience reduces a supernatural gift to the level of an
empirical, predictable, controllable phenomenon. While the hermeneutic can be seen in
the works of Nietzsche, Freud, Marx, and Durkheim, the specific venture of
deconstructing religious experience was taken up by the American Pragmatist John
Dewey. In the attempt to ‘get behind’ an awareness of the supernatural, Dewey reduces
it to its ‘natural’ causes and conditions ‘beneath the surface’ of consciousness. The fear
is that if all elements in consciousness are reduced to empirical explanation, locating
grace in consciousness renders it vulnerable to the same reduction. Thirdly, since an
experience of grace, aside from the Catholic mystical tradition, tends to be associated
with the more spirited practices of some of the non-Catholic denominations, the
resistance to affirming an experiential dimension to grace can be a means of preserving
the contemplative mode of worship that typifies the Catholic tradition. In other words, it
may be a deliberate attempt, on the part of the *magisterium*, to distance the Church
liturgically from the anti-intellectual piety of some of the more charismatic churches for
whom spontaneity in prayer—extemporaneous speech and tongues—the *experience* of
being a sacred conduit through which the explosive grace of the spirit flows—becomes
the mark of genuine religiosity; for such churches, any trace of a calculated, measured,
and planned response to the Word of God—any hint of rational reflection—renders the
response impersonal and automatically invalidates the prayer. The insistence that “grace
escapes our experience and cannot be known except by faith” can be seen as an
apologetic maneuver that attempts to distinguish and preserve the rich meditative
spirituality of the Catholic liturgical tradition.

In an attempt to defend Catholic piety and retain the supernatural and mysterious
sense of grace, conservative voices in the Catholic Church tend to propose the Thomistic

---

theology of grace, or most typically, some conceptualist variation, as the final and definitive word. In this conceptual framework, grace is relegated to a plane of existence beyond human consciousness—quarantined—and thereby removed from the dangers that would result from thinking about it in terms of human experience. Some proponents of this view presume the anachronism that the question of ‘grace and experience’ was already addressed and settled by St. Thomas; such an ahistorical approach treats later positions as somehow implied in a previous teaching in the way that the conclusion of a syllogism is covertly contained in the premises. Supporters of this anachronism even espouse the opinion that all the truths of later ages were implicit in the mind of St. Thomas, and for that matter in the minds of the gospel writers—as if these fishermen possessed all the fine distinctions and conceptual subtleties of medieval and modern theology. According to this view, the theology of St. Thomas becomes the perfect formulation of what was already contained in the Scriptures. Others presume that the question of ‘grace and experience’ is irrelevant precisely because it does not arise within the so called “perennial” theology. Lonergan refers to this particular permutation of classical consciousness as archaism. Proponents of this view recognize the novelty of post-scholastic statements but see them as erroneous expressions of the Faith, since such expressions depart, in their concepts and language, from the timeless truths of

---

6 Lonergan elaborates “A second solution is anachronism. It answers the questions but does not know about history. It assures everyone that these answers are already in the doctrines of the New Testament, that if they are not there explicitly, they are there implicitly.” For more details, see Bernard J. F. Lonergan, “Philosophy and Theology” A Second Collection, edited by William F. J. Ryan, S.J. and Bernard J. Tyrell, S.J. (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1996) 199.

7 About these two errors, Lonergan writes, “A first solution is archaism. It denies the fact of historical change, or it claims that men should not have changed. It insists that the Gospel be preached in every age as it was preached in Antioch and Ephesus, in Corinth and Rome. It refuses to answer the questions that arise, not within the context of the New Testament, but on the later soil of Greco-Roman culture, or in medieval Paris, or at Trent, or at Vatican I or II.” For more details, see Lonergan, “Philosophy and Theology” in A Second Collection, edited by William F. J. Ryan, S.J. and Bernard J. Tyrell, S.J. (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1996) 198-199.
Scholasticism. For the faithful who are unaware of history, statements are either genuinely new, and therefore false because they are not part of the original “deposit,” or they are not really new and so implicit in what was already said.

This chapter, on the development of the theology of grace, attempts to reverse these counter-positions. In other words, it will attempt to demonstrate that the statements of transcendental Thomism, which express the experiential dimension of grace, correctly answer a genuinely new but far from irrelevant question in Catholic theology.

Moreover, this chapter on the development of the theology of grace takes seriously the revolution in interpretive theory inaugurated by what Gadamer calls the ‘hermeneutic priority of the question.’ Such a method of analysis roots the meaning of a text in the originating questions of its authors. Consequently, the statements that make up a given text are seen not merely as statements but as answers to questions. According to this critical attitude, the full meaning of a statement cannot be ascertained without understanding the question to which the statement is an answer. Furthermore, while statements are answers to questions, questions, in this view, arise from a context of previous statements. But the statements that coalesce to form the contexts in which such questions emerge are themselves answers to preceding questions. So understanding the meaning of a statement requires that one pay attention to the history of interconnected questions and answers integral to its formation. To understand the meaning of any statement is to understand it as the result of a complicated history of questions and answers. Furthermore, Charles Hefling explains that

The doctrine that the Son is consubstantial with the Father means all of that, but that is not all it means. No sooner had the Nicene decree been accepted than a new series of questions arose, the first one being whether the Holy Spirit too is consubstantial with the Father. Each new question
raised and each new answer given changed the context in which Nicea’s doctrine was understood. The process has marked time, but it has never stood still. The scholastics raised new philosophical questions. Luther raised the question of sources. Newman raised the question of development. What the homoousious, or any other doctrine, means is not what it meant any one point along the way. What it means is what it has been meaning.8

In other words, answers to questions, or, solutions to problems, eventually give rise to further problems and further solutions that cast a new light on the previous problems and solutions. It is another way of saying, statements and positions, as carriers of meaning, are historical because human ‘meaning’ is a historical ‘reality.’ In the salutary words of Lonergan, “concepts have dates.” Thus, understanding the meaning of a theological formula involves understanding its morphogenesis. In order, then, to conceive the full import of the ‘experience of grace’ as the solution to a theological problem, one needs to trace its historical development and thereby attain a perspective which grasps the linked sequence of intellectual problems and solutions integral to its evolution. Therefore, a developmental account of grace meets the demands of a post-enlightenment critical hermeneutics.

C. Grounding the Notion of Development

What does it mean to speak of a theology overcoming the limitations of its predecessor? What does it mean to speak of theological progress? Though defined by Anselm in the eleventh century as fides querens intellectum, Christian theology had always been, since its very inception, a conscious attempt to understand the sacred doctrines received and affirmed by faith. Since the purpose of theology is to understand revealed truth, the question about the development of theological understanding demands answers to prior questions regarding the manner in which human understanding develops.

What does it mean for human understanding to rise above the limitations of prior ages?
What are the principles of its limitation? How does human understanding expand its
compass and extend its reach?

In the medieval world, understanding, if considered to be true, assumes an eternal
status. There is no conception of its development because there is no conception of its
limitations. Since its terms are considered absolute, it is not restricted by the historical
context in which it operates but only by a moronic inability to grasp first principles or a
failure to correctly apply the rules of logic. Regarding method in theology in the middle-
ages, Lonergan remarks that “its scrutiny of the data presented by Scripture and tradition
was quite insufficient. On the whole it was unaware of history: of the fact that every act
of meaning is embedded in a context, and that over time contexts change subtly, slowly,
surely.”

He goes on to say that

A contemporary theology must take and has taken the fact of history into
account. Inasmuch as it does so, St. Thomas ceases to be the arbiter to
whom all can appeal for the solution of contemporary questions; for, by
and large, contemporary questions are not the same as the questions he
handled, and the contemporary context is not the context in which he
treated them.

In my opinion, scholastic thinking did not grasp and formulate a notion of development,
in part, because it failed to achieve a more complete understanding of human
understanding. Now it is evident that questions regarding the nature of human
understanding are methodologically prior to questions regarding the extent to which one
theological understanding exceeds another and the precise manner in which one
theological understanding exceeds another. The answers to these prior and more basic
cognitional questions can be established in and through a careful study and articulation of

---

10 Ibid. 49
11 ‘Basic’ is not to be understood in the sense of simplistic but in the sense of primordial.
human understanding and can serve the function of critically grounding\(^{12}\) an evaluative history of ideas. In other words, a complete understanding of human understanding in its causes, conditions, limitations, and pathways of development, will yield a critical and normative set of criteria for measuring, relating, and appraising systematic theological positions on grace.

But how does one arrive at such a robust understanding of human understanding? In brief, it requires the implementation of certain transcendental techniques of introspection. For the scholastics, however, the study of human understanding was a subset of the study of the rational soul; and this was carried out by means of an ancient method known, in some recent circles, as metaphysical or faculty psychology.

Concerning this method, Lonergan points out that pre-modern science “employed one and the same method for the study of plants, animals, and men. One was to know acts by their objects, habits by acts, potencies by habits, and the essence of the souls by their potencies. The procedure was purely objective…”\(^{13}\) That is, pre-modern psychology expressed the rational subject, including his sensitive and intellectual operations, habits, and potencies, in the categories of metaphysics.\(^{14}\) In his *De Anima*, Aristotle, the ancient progenitor of this view, offers his reasoning:

> in the order of investigation the question of what an agent does precedes the question, what enables it to do what it does. If this is correct, we must on the same ground go yet another step farther back and have some clear view of the objects of each; thus we must start with these objects, e.g. with food, with what is perceptible, or with what is intelligible.\(^{15}\)

---

\(^{12}\) ‘Critically grounding’ is to be distinguished from the way in which Immanuel Kant employs the concept. To ‘critically ground’ statements does not mean to adumbrate a set of *a priori* concepts but to bring to light the methodical set of operations that give rise to judgments.  
Aristotle studies the acts of an agent in relation to the objects attained by those acts. In this viewpoint, operations are distinguished on the basis of their corresponding objects; and since the objects of sensation and intellection pertain to the domain of metaphysics, the relation of the operation to the object is understood as an instance of efficient or final causality.

For Aristotle and his scholastic successors, the intentional operations of a rational subject were interpreted as the proportionate effects of intelligible and sensible causes. The conscious data on an act of understanding acquired through such a method is data on insight in relation to its corresponding object. But since the method does not attend to the full range of conscious data, it remains unable to attain a complete understanding of human understanding. On the other hand, transcendental method begins not with the objects of understanding but with the performance of understanding. As Lonergan puts it, “one must begin from the performance if one is to have the experience necessary for understanding what performance is.”

While intentional acts are given as part of immediate experience, a direct focus on such acts requires that one develop certain techniques of self-attention. Lonergan claims that

our attention is apt to be focused on the object, while our conscious operating remains peripheral. We must, then, enlarge our interest, recall that one and the same operation not only intends an object but also reveals an intending subject, discover in our own experience the concrete truth of that general statement. That discovery, of course, is not a matter of looking, inspecting, gazing upon. It is an awareness, not of what is intended, but of the intending. It is finding in oneself the conscious occurrence, [understanding], whenever an object is [understood].

---

17 For Aristotle, though potencies, habits, and the nature of the soul are deduced, the act of understanding is, to some extent, conscious. See Aristotle, *De Anima* III.2.11-12 *The Basic Works of Aristotle* edited by Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941) 583.
Since Aristotle places a methodological emphasis on intentional objects, he tends to notice only the conscious relation of understanding to its external causes. In contrast to this approach, transcendental method, through a technique of heightening one’s conscious self-presence, can, according to Lonergan, bring into focal awareness a full and immediate experience of understanding not simply in relation to its corresponding object but as a component element in the dynamic structure of conscious intentionality.

C. 1 Questions as Source and Limitation of Understanding

Lonergan claims that such a full and immediate experience of an act of understanding or insight will reveal, among other things, its role as an act that releases the tension of inquiry. To understand human understanding adequately is to understand it not only as an act in relation to an exterior cause but as an act that emerges in response to questions. Since the medieval and ancient psychologist did not advert to the full range of internal data on insights, he will be likely to overlook questions as integral elements in the process of understanding. A theory of cognition that recognizes questions as essential components in human understanding presupposes a practice of transcendental method. In other words, one needs to bring to light the full experience of insight to grasp the connection between questions and understanding.

But with respect to the term understanding some distinctions can be drawn. One can speak of understanding as an intentional act, as the intelligible content of an intentional act, or as a concept or proposition that expresses the intelligible content of an intentional act. The three senses of understanding are both distinct and related. Concepts and their compounds (propositions) express intelligible contents, intelligible

---

contents are grasped by acts of understanding, and acts of understanding respond to the
questions of intelligence. Therefore, theological propositions or statements are never
mere statements. Rather, in light of an intentionality analysis, one begins to see
theological statements as answers to questions.

One needs to know something to ask a question; and not just something, but
something about the answer to be known. However, one need not know everything about
the answer to be known. This erroneous analysis of episteme can be traced to Plato, for
whom questions serve a rhetorical not a constitutive function in human understanding.22
In contrast, transcendental method reveals that questions are heuristic.23 While a question
does not presuppose the answer to be understood, it anticipates the general structure of
the understanding to be grasped. What one knows in advance is not the answer to the
question but what would count as an answer to the question. But the kinds of contents
and intelligible relations that questions anticipate depend upon the horizon of the
questioner. Lonergan explains that “as our field of vision, so too the scope of our
knowledge and the range of our interests are bounded…” He goes on to say that “in this
sense what lies beyond one’s horizon is simply outside the range of one’s knowledge or
interests: one neither knows nor cares.”24 Since authentic inquiry presupposes both
knowledge and interest, and horizons place limits on what one knows and cares about, a

22 In the Meno, Plato articulates the epistemological problem of learning. It can be expressed in logical
form: if one does not already know the answer to his question, then he cannot know when he has found it.
Plato denies the consequent and so must deny the antecedent: but one does, in fact, know when he has
found the answer; therefore, he does not already know the answer to his question. In other words, he
must already know the answer. The way Plato formulates the epistemological problem commits him to a
doctrine of recollection. Either questions anticipate an unknown and knowledge is impossible or there is
knowledge and questions serve as reminders of what one already knows. For Plato, questions remind the
soul of what it already knows. That is, they seem to serve a rhetorical not a constitutive function in human
understanding. See McMullin, Spirit as Inquiry, Continuum, FS 1964.
23 See Bernard J. F. Lonergan, Insight CWL3 edited by Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto:
University of Toronto, 1992) 67-70.
24 Lonergan, Method in Theology 236.
given horizon limits the kinds of questions that can be asked. But questions are a constitutive element in understanding; and so the kind of understanding one attains depends upon the kind of questions that one raises. In other words, prior knowledge and concerns restrict what questions can be raised and specifies a range of possible understanding.

**C. 2 The Differentiation of Human Consciousness: Widening the Scope of Relevant Questions**

I delineated the limitations of human understanding in terms of the questions to which human intelligence responds and the horizons in which it operates. But how does human understanding transcend such limitations? In other words, how does human understanding develop? More specifically, how does theological understanding develop and what are the criteria for assessing its development? Progress or development in theology does not simply refer to an increase in understanding but an increase in true understanding. What are the criteria that need to be met in order to arrive at a true understanding? In general, understanding is reached by inquiring about intelligible patterns or forms in data and attaining answers. But satisfying the conditions for a true understanding means more than simply asking and answering such questions. Just as it becomes clear, on the basis of an intentionality analysis, that understanding emerges in response to questions, so also, when one pays attention to the conscious exigencies of judgment, one concludes that the truth of understanding is reached when one has asked and correctly answered all the relevant questions.25 But how does one determine relevance? What kind of understanding is a given question relevant to? There is no

---

25 See Lonergan, the discussion on “invulnerable insight,” *Insight* 309.
universal standard by which to measure relevance. The criterion for relevance varies in relation to variations in one’s pattern of experience. Lonergan speaks of consciousness as a stream, but the stream involves not only the temporal succession of different contents but also direction, striving, effort. Moreover, this direction of the stream is variable. Thales was so intent upon the stars that he did not see the well into which he tumbled. The milkmaid was so indifferent to the stars that she could not overlook the well. Still, Thales could have seen the well, for he was not blind; and perhaps the milkmaid could have been interested in the stars, for she was human.26

Thales tumbled into the well because his entire consciousness was suffused with intellectual concerns and questions. In contrast to Thales, the consciousness of the milkmaid was directed, moved, structured by practical rather than intellectual interests. Now insights or acts of understanding are not unique to the intellectual pattern. Understanding occurs in all of the patterns of experience. The milkmaid, not unlike Thales, certainly asked questions and had insights, but her questions and insights were employed in the service of meeting practical demands. While her daily sequences of questions were headed towards insights that aid in the more expeditious performance of practical tasks, his gave rise to a philosophic solution to the problem of the one and the many. So the kinds of questions that are relevant in a practical context differ significantly from the kinds of questions that are relevant in the context of the intellectual pattern of experience. The theologian, like Thales, operates in an intellectual context of meaning; consequently, the questions that arise in this context are relevant to the extent that they are *explanatory*.

But the intellectual way of thinking was not always distilled out and purified of its connection with the more primitive modes of human thought. For centuries it was latent.

\[\text{Ibid. 205}\]
in the recesses of human consciousness. Developing the kind of control of sensitive
memory, imagination, feelings, thoughts that subordinate them to theoretic concerns is
monumentally difficult to achieve; for it requires a certain habit of mind that sustains a
focus on the abstract and is resilient enough to overcome the almost irresistible pressures
of psychic demands\(^\text{27}\) and the spontaneous drive towards biological extroversion.\(^\text{28}\) For
this reason, it took an inspiring and magnetic personality like Socrates, a figure of almost
prophetic stature, to actuate these latent possibilities in human consciousness. Lonergan
refers to the emergence of this demarcation of human consciousness as the movement
from the first to the second stage of meaning. He explains that

In the first stage the subject, in his pursuit of the concrete good, also
attends, understands, judges. But he does not make a specialty of these
activities. He does not formulate a theoretical ideal in terms of
knowledge, truth, reality, causality….but in the second stage of meaning
the subject continues to operate in the commonsense manner in all his
dealings with the particular and concrete, but along with this mode of
operation he also has another, the theoretical.\(^\text{29}\)

In other words, it is not as if an interest in a true understanding of things was absent from
the first stage of meaning, but what was meant by ‘true understanding’ evolved from the
first to the second, due to the philosophic resistance to social and cultural decline. With
respect to the first stage of meaning, Lonergan says that “later notions of truth had not yet
been developed. The Hebrew thought of truth in terms of fidelity, and when he spoke of

\(^{27}\) Regarding the topic of conversion, Lonergan points out certain ‘demands of the psyche.’ He writes,
“conversion is not any simple matter of setting down principles and drawing conclusions…A successful
synthesis maintains itself, just as in the psychoanalytic situation or the therapeutic situation in general, the
patient spontaneously puts up resistance…to the moves of the therapist that would bring about the cure he
needs; he finds all sorts of reasons to maintain his present position. This is just an instance of the inertia
that fundamentally is healthy and necessary in maintaining the existing situation.” For more details on the
demands of the psyche, see Lonergan, “Subject and Horizon,” \textit{Phenomenology and Logic: The Boston
College Lectures on Mathematical Logic and Existentialism} edited by Philip J. McShane (Toronto:
University of Toronto, 2001) 289-290.

\(^{28}\) See Lonergan, \textit{Insight} 205-207.

\(^{29}\) Lonergan, \textit{Method in Theology} 93-94.
doing the truth he meant doing what was right.” The transition to the second stage of meaning required what Lonergan calls a “theoretical differentiation” of human consciousness. In this stage of meaning, the theoretical mode of thinking became adequately distinguished, in its canons, procedures, questions and insights, from a kind of mytic consciousness. One can even see an embryonic stage of this process in Christian thinking as early as the second century when Clement of Alexandria began to distinguish a philosophic conception of God from the copious anthropomorphisms of Scripture. The shift to the third stage of meaning requires and additional differentiation in which common sense and theoretical modes of though are distinguished and grounded in interiority.

Development in theological understanding has to do with widening the scope of relevant questions. Correct understanding involves asking and answering all the relevant questions. As the horizon of Christian thinking becomes more and more differentiated, further and further questions become relevant and the insights that respond to them have to become more penetrating. A more differentiated horizon expands the radius of what is considered a relevant question and insight in theology. What appears to be a totality of relevant questions from one point of view, when considered from a higher viewpoint, remains a limited set. Development in theology, making progress in understanding the mystery of God and everything in relation to the mystery of God, has meant a continual

30 Ibid. 306
31 See Lonergan, Method in Theology 309.
approximation to the “all” of the ‘resolution of all relevant questions’ demanded by the norms immanent and operative in human intelligence.33

Development with respect to a theological understanding transcends the limited horizon of its predecessor. I have been considering the preceding horizon in relation to the higher viewpoint as a limitation to be transcended. But how is the less advanced viewpoint positively related to its more advanced successor? When a development in theology occurs, the relation between the transcended and the transcendent viewpoint is not dialectical or merely complementary but rather, has a genetic intelligibility. But how does one express this genetic intelligibility? When a new horizon creates the conditions for the possibility of more differentiated questions, the theology that emerges in response to such questions, if it is a genuine development, does not simply correct and complement, but also sublates its predecessor. The further relevant questions of a more differentiated horizon give rise to insights that, under the proper theoretic guidance, coalesce to form a higher viewpoint.34 Such a higher viewpoint will not only amend and modify the insights of its intellectual ancestor, but also enrich and perfect them; since

33 Development in theology requires that one allow further relevant questions to emerge; and this is not always an easy matter. According to Martin Heidegger, “to state the interrogative sentence, even in a tone of questioning, is not yet to question…on the contrary…our questioning …opens up the horizon, in order that the essent may dawn in such questionableness…it is this questioning that moves us into the open.” (Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven and London: Yale University, 1959) 20, 29-30). In line with Heidegger, Lonergan believes that ‘being’ or ‘reality’ is not ‘already-out-there-now’ but, to use the language of phenomenology, “concealed;” consequently, the means of apprehending reality (or letting reality show itself) is not a matter of taking a look but a matter of asking questions. Questions, if they are ‘relevant,’ open up, or reveal, ‘being.’ But since questions involve opening oneself up to an unknown, which sometimes gives rise to anxiety and even dread, authentic questions, especially ones that develop understanding, require an existential decision. Despite the cerebral nature of academic disciplines, the questions of an academic are an intensely personal affair. In theology, true understanding is reached to the extent that the theologian is intellectually converted—that is, to the extent that he is personally committed to the real over the apparent—to the extent that his heart desires the truth more than his own personal satisfaction. Since questions are not the product of logical analysis but arise out of an existential openness, development in theological understanding, like all developments in understanding, is objective, not in the sense of being derived from an object of perception or intuition, but in the sense of being the term intended by all the relevant questions of a converted consciousness; it is an objectivity that is “the fruit of authentic subjectivity.” (Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 292.)

34 Lonergan, *Insight* 37.
these prior insights are integral to its development, the higher viewpoint “far from interfering with [them] or destroying [them], on the contrary needs [them], includes [them], preserves all [their] proper features and properties, and carries them forward to a fuller realization within a richer context”\textsuperscript{35}….of meaning that will “extend their relevance and significance.”\textsuperscript{36}

**C.3 Nicaea: a Model of Development in Theology\textsuperscript{37}**

An important illustration of the early differentiation of Christian consciousness can be found in the movement of philosophic and post-philosophic thinking leading up to and following the doctrine originating at Nicaea. The Nicene statement is more or less an answer to the question: who is the Son of God? The authors of the New Testament a few centuries earlier were asking ostensibly similar questions, but their answers were noticeably different. Who is Jesus, according to the Gospels? He is the messiah, the one in whom God fulfills his promise to establish the covenant forever. The New Testament authors tended to conceive Jesus in terms of the chief symbols of the “Old Testament.” While these authors knew that, in some sense, Jesus was both divine and distinct from the Father, their concerns, unlike later Christian thinkers, were not driven by the need to understand the precise sense in which Jesus was divine. The New Testament is not a systematic treatise on Christ, and its authors were not concerned about logical coherence but about telling a story that would change the world.

\textsuperscript{37} The rather lengthy excursus on the development of the Nicene doctrine and post-Nicene Trinitarian theology serves the purpose of formulating an analogy for functional differentiation and systematic developments within the theology of grace. Since much has been written on the development of the Nicene doctrine and its relation to later Trinitarian and Christological insights, the case of Nicaea can serve as a frame of reference for understanding a similar process of evolution in the theology of grace.
The questions of the earliest disciples arose within a horizon. It was a horizon in which a theoretical context of meaning had not yet been adequately distinguished from a symbolic context of meaning. Their concerns were not theoretical but practical. Their interest was not in systematic understanding but in effecting religious conversion. For this reason, their questions were directed towards finding the most effective means of communicating the importance of Jesus for human salvation. Questions result in understanding; however, the object of early apostolic understanding was not the Son of God “in himself” but the Son of God “for us.” In other words, the New Testament authors could ask and answer all the questions that they considered relevant and still never come to an understanding of the hypostatic union or the consubstantial reality of the Son in relation to the Father. The kinds of systematic questions that arose in the minds of later Christian thinkers were, simply speaking, beyond the horizon of the New Testament authors. Had Thomas Aquinas been able to converse with Mark and introduce his question about the locus of union in Christ, whether it be in the suppositum or hypostasis, it would most likely be regarded as strange at best and insignificant at worst; for what cannot be assimilated into a given horizon will not be of interest, and “if forced on our attention…will seem irrelevant or unimportant.”

The Christian conversation with Greek philosophy, Platonism in particular, effected a change in the kinds of questions that were being asked and the kinds of answers that were being sought. To the question ‘who is Jesus,’ the Gospel writers were content to draw upon the symbols of their own Jewish heritage to formulate an answer. But the Hellenization of Christian consciousness opened up the possibility of a different...

---

38 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 3.q. 2, a. 3
kind of question and a different kind of answer. ‘Who is the Son of God?’ is a very different question when it is asked by someone like the Gospel writer Luke and when it is asked by someone like Origen. Origen’s question seeks an explanatory understanding; that is, as a theoretical question, it anticipates an answer that goes beyond the narrative and attempts to understand the Son of God not in relation to the believer but in his metaphysical relation to the Father.

This is not to say that the New Testament authors had no awareness of Greek philosophy. One could point out the Prologue to John’s Gospel. But even if John consciously associates the *logos* with the divine mediator found in the Neo-Platonic texts, it does not mean that he had a fully mature theoretical perspective. The Gospel of John does not reflect the kind of systematic control of meaning that one finds in 3rd and 4th century commentaries on Christ. More than likely, according to biblical exegete N.T. Wright, John’s use of *logos* resonates with themes found in the wisdom literature of the Jewish tradition. Instead of the *logos* of God descending from the heavens and finding its resting place in the Torah and Temple, as depicted in the book of Sirach, the prologue portrays the *logos* becoming flesh. So Jesus becomes the new Torah who brings to completion the Law of Moses. His flesh is the new Temple; it is torn down and rebuilt to accomplish purification and renewal. In that sense, Jesus is the location of redemption. He establishes the New Jerusalem. John, not unlike the Synoptic authors, uses the symbols of the Jewish tradition to convey the identity of Jesus. For the most part, the New Testament authors answered the question ‘who is Christ?’ in the terms drawn from their religious narrative.

---

For later Christian thinkers informed by Greek philosophy, the fact that Jesus was divine and distinct from the Father raised theoretical questions about the identity of Christ: If the Son is God, but he is distinct from the Father, in what sense is the Son of God divine? How do you explain his divinity? What is the precise relation between the divinity of the Son and the divinity of the Father? But these were questions that could not be answered simply by appealing to the Old and New Testament narratives. So because of the Christian appropriation of the logical techniques of Greek philosophers, the scriptures began to raise questions that the scriptures themselves could not adequately answer.

What does it mean to claim that later theologies were able to transcend the limitations of the theology of scripture? Later Christian thinkers were operating from a different vantage point. The horizon of later Christian thinkers set the conditions for the possibility of raising further relevant questions—different kinds of relevant questions. Such questions opened up the possibility of a range of explanatory insights. Instead of being limited to understanding the Son of God “for us,” theoretical questions seek a possible understanding of the Son of God “in himself”—that is, in his eternal and uncreated set of dynamic relations to the Father and to the Holy Spirit.

While the biblical authors depicted the identity of the Son of God in terms of his relevance to human salvation, Origen’s questions anticipated a different kind of answer. Origen appealed to Platonist categories to answer the question about the divinity of the Son of God.\(^{41}\) Origen, within the more differentiated horizon of middle Platonism, said the Son of God was divine by participation. So when Origen asks the question: ‘in what

---

\(^{41}\) See Origin, *De Principiis* Book II
sense is the Son of God divine?’ he intends an answer that expresses the identity of the Son in terms of his eternal relation to the unoriginated *arche*.

Lonergan illustrates this same quality of explanatory understanding by contrasting the unskilled questions of a child with the more sophisticated questions of a specialist. He explains: “If a biologist takes his young son to the zoo and both pause to look at a giraffe, the boy will wonder whether it bites or kicks, but the father will see another manner in which skeletal, locomotive, digestive, vascular, and nervous systems combine and interlock.”42 The child focuses on the descriptive features of the giraffe and considers it in relation to himself, wondering whether or not it will kick or bite him. In contrast, the biologist concerns himself with the abstract and intelligible relations among the pattern of functions that constitute the reality of the giraffe. The specialist sees giraffes not only as a set of inter-dependent internal systems, but also as functional elements in the delicate and complicated bionetwork of nature.

Arius agreed with Origen that the Son of God participates in the divinity of the Father. Arius, like Origen, was thinking in Platonist terms. But since Arius stressed the absolute unity of God, the idea of being God by participation raised suspicions: can one who derives divinity from another really be divine? Is it coherent to talk about one who is less divine than the Father as truly God? Given his monarchianist conception of God, less than God is not God at all. According to Arius, if the Son is subordinate to the divinity of the Father, then the Son of God is a creature. So Arius pushed the subordinationism of Origen’s middle Platonist conception to its logical conclusion.

Christian thinkers were using Platonist categories to conceive the relation between the

---

Son and the Father. What Arius showed was that a Platonist understanding of the Son of God rules out his divinity.

The statement, propounded by the Arians, that the Son of God is a creature precipitated a crisis in the Christian Church. Such a crisis erupted because the Arian statement was in clear tension with the longstanding Christian belief in the Son’s divinity. The crisis demanded a response from the Church—a counter-statement affirming what the Church always held to be true. But before the Church could respond to the Arians, she had to get clear on what exactly she meant when she affirmed the divinity of the Son. So presumably, the council fathers began to raise questions: ‘how do we express the relation between the Son and the Father in a way that counters the Arian claim and preserves the steadfast belief in the divinity of the Son? What precisely does it mean to say that the Son of God is divine?’ It was not simply a wide open question; that is, the Arian teaching served to clarify what the Church was looking for. Arius made perfectly clear the basis of his teaching: if the Son of God is less divine than the Father, then he is not God at all. So the question was seeking an answer that would somehow affirm the true divinity of the Son in a way that avoided both Sabellianism, on the one hand, and any hint of subordinationism on the other. In other words, since the council fathers were responding to Arius, their answer to the question ‘what does the divinity of the Son mean?’ would have to express a relation between the Son and the Father that was not susceptible to the kind of critique that was leveled against Origen. What precisely does it mean, then, to say that the Son of God is divine? It means, according to the council, that he is ‘one in being’ with the Father.
The idea that the Son is ‘one in being’ with the Father was held in the past, but it never meant exactly what it did at Nicaea. According to Lonergan, Athanasius clarified what the council meant by *homoousious*: whatever is predicated of the Father can also be predicated of the Son, except for the term Father; whatever is attributed to the Son can be attributed to the Father, except for the term Son.\(^{43}\) It meant a radical one and the same, a radical equality between the Son and the Father, while also maintaining distinction. It had to mean a radical one and the same to overcome the Arian difficulty. So the Arian controversy opened up a set of questions that pushed the thinking of the Christian Church towards the Nicene definition. The Nicene definition was not a simple repetition of the belief in the divinity of the Son, nor was it even a repetition in the belief in the ‘full’ divinity of the Son. Rather, the Nicene statement elaborated the precise sense in which the Son of God was divine. It was heuristic in its formulation. It did not attribute to the Son of God particular qualities, like being eternal and impassible. It was much more radical. It meant whatever *at all* is attributed to the Father is to be attributed to the Son except for the term Father.\(^{44}\)

The question developed out of the history of Platonist reflections on the identity of the Son of God. Since Christians had not yet developed a philosophical vocabulary of their own, Origen and Arius were attempting to work out Platonist answers to philosophical questions about the Son of God. So it was the Platonist reflections of Origen and Arius that drove the development of the question to which the Nicene statement was an answer. Being historically minded, we must view the Platonist statements of Arius and Origen, not as contradictions to the Nicene statement, but as


\(^{44}\) Ibid. 251
integral moments in the process by which the Church came to apprehend and articulate a decidedly Christian truth. The Nicene statement regarding the Son of God is not a Platonic solution to a Christian problem. Platonism, in the words of Lonergan, “would not bear the type of thinking represented by the *homoousion*, the *consubstantiale*, of Nicaea.”

Consubstantial, as understood and employed by the council fathers, was neither a Platonic nor Scriptural term. At Nicaea, the Christian Church began to develop a philosophical vocabulary of its own. But while the Nicene statement expressed a distinctively Christian intelligibility that transcended the categories of Platonist metaphysics, it was, nevertheless, a response to a question that evolved in and through the early Christian conversation with thinkers informed by Platonist theories.

Was this statement somehow logically implicit in the knowledge of Scripture in the way that a conclusion of a syllogism is logically implicit in the premises? No. There is a way in which it said something new that was not said before. Statements are never merely statements but answers to questions; and the Nicene statement said something new because it was an answer to a new question. It was a question motivated by the concern to find a solution to the problems raised by Arianism. The Church, from the beginning, did not already have the answer because it did not already have the question.

**C.4 Post-Philosophical Thinking and Systematic Development**

The Nicene statement was a distinctively Christian answer to a distinctively Christian question. The data of revelation—the writings and practices of the Christian

---

Church—could not support, and in fact resisted, a philosophical interpretation of the Son of God. No system of rational thought could bring to light the intelligibility immanent in the data of Revelation. As such, the language of Nicaea became representative of a kind of post-philosophical thinking within the Christian Church. As such, the statement does not explain the eternal generation of the Son from the Father, nor does it further elaborate the nature of God. Rather than being expository, the Nicene statement functions logically. Charles Hefling explains that “Logic, in the most basic sense, is a technique that regulates meaning by operating on the propositions in which meaning is expressed.” Homoousious represents a logical rule that governs the relation between propositions about the Son and propositions about the Father. It expresses a logical rule of identity with respect to predicates but not subjects; everything attributed to the Son must also be attributed to the Father, except for the term ‘Son’; everything attributed to the Father must also be attributed to the Son, except for the term ‘Father.’ Nicaea managed to articulate a relationship between the Father and the Son that transcends the limitations of human concepts; it is impossible to generate a proportionate understanding of the relationship expressed by the homoousion of Nicaea. If x and y are concrete subjects and all attributes that belong to x also belong to y, then subject x and subject y would be identical. But the doctrine of Nicaea admits an absolute equality

---

46 ‘Philosophical’ refers to the specific philosophical interpretation of the Son of God, namely, Platonist philosophies. While the data of Revelation excludes a Platonist interpretation of the Son of God, it does not exclude a theological interpretation.


48 Of course Aristotle would claim that, for example, geometrical objects, such as circles, are essentially identical but numerically distinct. So even though all the attributes that belong to circle A, with respect to its circularity, also belongs to circle B, with respect to its circularity, circle A and circle B are numerically distinct. As a ‘such,’ they are identical, but as a ‘this,’ they are distinct. As circles, they are identical but as concrete subjects, they are different. But circle A and circle B are numerically distinct subjects because their accidental features differentiate them. For Aristotle, this is true not only of geometrical objects but of all beings of the same species. All beings of the same species are essentially the same because they share a
with respect to predicates but a distinction with respect to divine subjects. As such, the
Nicene statement serves the quite modest purpose of doing no more and no less than
‘naming a mystery.’ Once the mystery of God is named, affirmed, enunciated, the
Christian community can begin to ask what the affirmation means; once the mystery is
identified, one can attempt to understand the mystery; and since the Nicene statement
refers to a mystery that transcends human comprehension, it remains an inexhaustible
formula that initiates and guides an ongoing development in systematic understanding.49
Since the formula expresses a transcendent mystery, development in systematic
understanding becomes a matter of discovering ever more appropriate human analogues.
Philosophical speculation on the divine essence clarified the non-corporeal nature of God.
Since God was conceived to be more like mind than matter, the unity and distinction
within human consciousness became established as the proper analogue for thinking
about unity and distinction within God.50 As the methods and instruments employed to

single form, but are numerically distinct because of their matter. (See Aristotle, Metaphysics Book VII ch.
8,1034A 1-8). In the case of God, however, there are no accidents and all three concrete divine subjects are
absolutely identical with the divine essence. Circle A is not absolutely identical with ‘circularity’ on
account of its accidental features. But the Son and the Father, as concrete subjects, are absolutely identical
with ‘divinity.’ The mystery is not that two subjects are essentially the same and numerically distinct but
that two concrete subjects are absolutely identical with a shared essence (free of accidents) and yet
numerically distinct.

49 When Lonergan discusses the development of Christological questions, he makes the case that a prior
doctrinal development that names the mystery of Christ as one person in two natures is the framework
within which one can ask further and further questions. He writes, “Now the questions that are put about
Christ today are psychological questions, they are historical questions: How did he think? What did he
know as a boy? What did he know as a boy of twelve? What were the questions he was asking about? Was
he learning something? When he asks Mary, ‘Where was Lazarus lying? Where is the tomb?’ (see John
11:34) was he learning something, or was his question insincere? And so on. All those psychological
questions come up, insofar as anthropology develops, it becomes possible to give consideration even to
those questions, because theoretical-[doctrinal] development makes the apprehension of the data possible.
Without the theoretical development, you haven’t got the questions to ask about the text—does it mean this
or that? –because you have no ‘this’ or ‘that’ to put in your questions.” (Lonergan, “Theology as Christian
Phenomenon,” Theological and Philosophical Papers, 271).

50 Greek Orthodox theologians find suspect the methodological primacy of speculation on the divine
essence. One reason is their insistence that Scripture not metaphysics is the starting point of all theological
reflection. The consequence of the metaphysical reading, as they see it, is that the divine essence serves to
ground the unity in God, which fails to preserve the Biblical notion of God the Father as divine arche. This
penetrate the depths of human consciousness developed and became more refined, the human analogue acquired a greater degree of precision. Aquinas was able to move beyond Augustine and advance a more theoretical and scientific understanding of eternal commitment to a Paternal *arche* seems to be the heart of the issue in the *filioque* controversy. From the Orthodox perspective, unless the Father alone is the principle of the processions of Son and Spirit, not only is the Biblical understanding of the Father as ultimate source denied but the Spirit becomes subordinate to the Son. In Orthodox logic, if the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, then the Father and the Son share an activity that the Spirit does not possess, namely, the activity of generating (or more specifically, ‘spirating.’) In the view of some, this subordinates the Spirit to the Son and violates the divine unity by positing two principles of generation in God.

But the Orthodox position, in my view, fails to answer certain questions that arise from a theoretical consideration of God. The Catholic argument proceeds as follows: if one takes seriously the meaning of the Nicene statement about Christ and the similar pronouncement about the Holy Spirit, namely, that all names predicated of the Son and Spirit must also be predicated of the Father except for the names Son and Spirit, then the only means of “theoretically grounding” the distinction of God the Father from God the Son and God the Spirit is by ‘relations of origin.’ Now if the Father is alone the origin of the Son and the Spirit, the Father is clearly distinguished from the Son and the Spirit as the ‘originator’ is distinguished from the ‘originated,’ but the Son and the Spirit are indistinguishable from each other. If all the same attributes are shared by Son and Spirit, including the mode of their procession, then, although one can affirm a distinction in a doctrinal context, there is no means of grounding the distinction of Son and Spirit in a theoretical context. The *filioque* serves the function of grounding the distinction of Son and Spirit. The ‘only’ reason the Son and Spirit are not the same person is that the Son proceeds from the Father and the Spirit proceeds from the ‘Father and the Son.’ The benefit of a philosophical speculation on the essence of God is that it prevents a kind of picture-thinking about God. Without this kind of theoretical control, one tends to base ideas about God on images and mental pictures; and if one allows imaginative thinking to inform one’s apprehension of God, then one can imagine or picture the Son and the Spirit as two distinct processions from one source like two rays of light emanating from the same sun. But a philosophical speculation on the essence of God yields a conception of God as absolutely beyond space and time. So the Spirit cannot be spatially or temporally distinct from the Son of God; if both are absolutely identical to the essence of God, both are generated, all divine predicates belong to both equally, and there are no accidental determinations in God, there is no other way to ground their distinction. A philosophical speculation on the essence of God excludes images that would answer the question ‘how are the Son and Spirit distinguished;’ it prevents answers that appeal to imaginative thinking. Therefore, getting clear on the essence of God as pure spirit allows one to raise the question in a properly theoretical context; as such, the question anticipates an appropriately theoretical answer.

To the first objection: the fact that Scripture is the starting point for theology is not denied in the Catholic approach. But the Catholic tradition has taken seriously the exigencies of a theoretical differentiation in Christian consciousness. This requires that theologians, prior to answering Trinitarian questions, theoretically work out the meaning of God as the framework for thinking about divine persons and processions. To the second objection that the *filioque* posits two principles of procession and thereby violates the unity of God: when one gets clear by means of the psychological analogy that the procession of the Spirit is not unlike the love proceeding from a judgment of value (*verbum spirans amorem*) spoken by the Father, the Spirit is understood to proceed more accurately “through” the Son from the Father. Augustine makes the point crystal clear: “When it is said that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, we understand that his procession from the Son comes likewise to the Son from the Father. If it is from the Father that the Son has all that he has, it must be from the Father that he has the proceeding from him of the Holy Spirit.” (*De Trinitate*, Book XV.47) This more precise expression seems to be enough to preserve the Father as divine *arche* and prevent a subordination of the Spirit to the Son.
emanations in God, in part, because he was able to get more clear on the psychological analogue through the use of more sophisticated techniques of self-discovery.

By serving to clarify the meaning of the Nicene statement, Athanasius played an important role in the post-philosophical act of “naming the mystery” of God. This, in turn, opened up the possibility of continuous development in Trinitarian theology.

Similar to Athanasius, Augustine clarified the meaning of grace and made a contribution towards the development of the catholic doctrine of grace. Augustine participated in the Council of Carthage in 418 A.D., and his writings are included within the Synod of Orange in 529 A.D., in a section which features the “holy fathers.” Both councils served the purpose of defining the Christian doctrine of grace. Once the councils, with the aid of Augustine, were able to “name the mystery”—once they affirmed the absolutely gratuitous character of grace—theologians could begin the ongoing task of understanding the meaning of this gratuitous character with respect to the human person.51

D. The Scholastic Transition

A proper “theory” of grace began to surface in the writings of St. Augustine. While St. Augustine was, in some measure, theoretically minded, it was not until the full-scale medieval integration of Aristotelian philosophy and logic, several centuries later, that the theoretical development of Christian consciousness reached full maturity. The implications of this intellectual accomplishment were numerous and far-reaching. Not only did it enable a kind of comprehensive and systematic ordering of the vast deposit of

51 Just as the data of Revelation resisted a Platonic interpretation of the Son of God, Augustine brought to light the supernatural character of the Revealed data on grace. Through his controversy with Pelagius in particular, Augustine showed that the Revealed data on grace transcended the Ascetic viewpoint. The ascetic interpretation of grace, put forth by Pelagius, seemed to be a very human interpretation insofar as it assumes the idea of human justice and, to some extent, conceives grace within the context of an economy of exchange—of an autonomous freedom meriting reward or punishment. For more details on the Ascetic viewpoint, see J. Patout Burns, “Theological Anthropology,” Sources of Early Christian Thought (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981) 3-6.
statements stored in the rich treasury of scripture and tradition, but it ensured that theological understanding was governed by logical rigor and metaphysical analysis rather than the flow of images and feelings evoked by religious stories and symbols. In other words, it fully released theology from its common-sense and narrative apprehensions in order to answer questions that were otherwise unanswerable and meet the exigencies of scientific or explanatory understanding.

D.1 Concerns, Questions, Methods

A brief analysis of Augustine’s doctrine of grace will evince not only its merits but more importantly, its limitations in relation to its Scholastic successors. My intention here is not a point-for-point comparative analysis of Augustine and Aquinas on grace but to select a few instances of contrast in order to adduce sufficient evidence to corroborate the thesis of development. The content of Augustine’s mature statement, namely, that good will is not the condition of grace but rather its consequence, entailed a series of insights into the depth of human depravity and the radical impotence of the will. Such statements presuppose a set of concerns, questions, and methods that were integral to their generating insights. The concerns driving the development of Augustinian theology were, for the most part, not theoretical but apologetic; and as a corollary, the principal context in which he worked out the meaning of grace was not systematic but rather doctrinal. For this reason, his questions, unlike those of the later scholastics, did not seek a complete explanatory account of the reality of grace. His focus was decidedly more limited. On account of his study of Pauline literature, his own protracted existential battle with concupiscence, and the absence of a theorem of the supernatural, Augustine
conceived grace, more narrowly than did the Scholastics, as a divine solution to the problem of sin; he dwells on grace as healing rather than grace as elevating.

This perspective restricted the scope of relevant questions and pertinent insights. The point warrants reiteration; Augustine, in his later writings, was not seeking a comprehensive understanding of the reality of grace; rather, he was seeking to clarify the manner and the extent to which grace heals and liberates human liberty from the debilitating effects of sin. The question did not originate from a simple desire to know, but was prompted chiefly by the controversies fomented by Donatus and Pelagius, both of whom tended to stress a kind of humanistic optimism at odds with the implicit faith of the Church. In fact, it was the more sanguine declarations of Donatus and Pelagius that pushed Augustine to think of divine operation with an emphasis on the infirmity of the human will. In addition, since the aim was not to define but to defend, the method involved argument, indeed, but not philosophic argument nor any scientific ordering of thought, just triumphant rhetoric marshalling such an array of texts that the claim is obviously true, ‘Not I, but Scripture itself has argued with you.’ The existence of human liberty is proved from revelation; Pelagian ideas on grace are refuted in the same manner; and when the ultimate problem of reconciliation is faced, St. Augustine is fully content to exclaim *O altitudo* with St. Paul.\(^52\)

Consequently, the terms ‘liberty’ and ‘grace’ were, according Lonergan, “not the specialized products of abstract reflection but common notions to be found in scripture and indeed, familiar to all.”\(^53\) Augustine’s doctrine of grace was not the result of refined scientific questions and methods, but was largely reached, in the words of Patout Burns,

---


\(^53\) Ibid. 7
“by working out the logic of his assumptions under the pressure of events and the demands of controversy.”

For example, in his response to the Donatists, Augustine “insists that no one is free from all sin, not even from the time of baptism.”

His premise, however, does not derive from the exigencies of rational reflection but rather, “from the petition for forgiveness in the *Pater Noster* which every Christian prays.”

In other words, “the neglect of the natural desire for God and consequent assertion of the impotence of human nature were implications of…ecclesial [and Scriptural] doctrines.”

The Donatist and Pelagian controversies became, for Augustine, occasions to render explicit the implicit claims of revelation.

On the contrary, scholastic concerns were theoretical; their questions intended the analogous intelligibility of grace as well as its formulation in the technical terms and relations of definition. While Augustine made some distinctions, his distinctions were used, in his later works, chiefly in the service of apologetic not theoretical goals. Unlike the development of the Augustinian position on grace, the scholastic theology of grace, in the words of Patout Burns, “progressed through the resolution of a series of theoretical problems by the gradual appropriation of more adequate instruments of analysis.”

To understand the essence of grace and express its content in precise terminology requires, first and foremost, discriminating among divine gifts; it demands an apprehension of the manner in which the gift of grace differs from other divine gifts. So the scholastics began by seeking a means of distinguishing grace and creation as gifts. Even in the ancient

---

55 Ibid. 81
56 Ibid. 81 (emphasis mine)
57 Ibid. 186-187
58 Ibid. 13
Church, and no less in the mind of Augustine, the ‘natural’ and the ‘gracious’ were dogmatically defined as gifts of God beyond the desert of man. But prior to the context of twelfth and thirteenth century theology, such dogmatic and confessional statements, while inciting devotional practice, did not quite precipitate the sorts of questions that initiated the unparalleled theoretical achievement of St. Thomas. A burgeoning familiarity with Aristotelian texts, especially the logical works, seems to have effected a vital transition. The introduction of more sophisticated rational controls of meaning expanded the range of questions available to medieval theology. Within the horizon of a more differentiated consciousness, drawing distinctions between divine gifts shifts questions to the level of theory. If the ‘gracious’ and the ‘natural’ share a common definition with respect to their gift character, how does one distinguish them as gifts? The breakthrough to a supernatural order absolutely disproportionate to the order of nature, according to Lonergan, is to be attributed to Philip the Chancellor in 1230 A.D. Thomas, seeking to pursue theology as a science, exploited the distinction in the world of theory. The theorem of the supernatural by which St. Thomas intellectual grounds the distinction of grace and nature was an answer to a question that met the demands of medieval scientia.

In contrast to the polemics of Augustine, late medieval insights into the nature of grace were generated by the meticulous procedures of scientific method. The scholastics worked out the theorem of the supernatural as an extended analogy of proportion with nature. Since the theorem extrapolates from the natural order, it relied, as Lonergan

---

59 Even though the explanatory questions regarding the distinction between grace and nature were not raised until the time of Aquinas, there was a longstanding common-sense apprehension of gratuita exceeding naturalia. See Bernard J. F. Lonergan, Grace and Freedom 16.
Petillo  35

points out, on the discovery of a line of reference termed nature. Prior to the appropriation of Aristotelian insights and methods, medieval theology struggled to secure a clear conception of human nature. Aristotle conceived human nature on the basis of a method of metaphysical psychology. In his treatise on the soul, Aristotle explains that the initial phase requires an apprehension of objects in relation to their corresponding operations. On the basis of a conscious correlation of acts and objects, there is an inference to habits and potencies. Furthermore, an elaboration of potencies yields a specification of nature. With this understanding of nature in place, a collaborative theological effort in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was able to distinguish the abstract series: nature, intellect, will, and natural beatitude from the correlative abstract series: sanctifying grace, faith, charity, and supernatural beatitude. St. Thomas improved on the theorem by raising further questions, educing broader implications, and establishing additional correlations. That is, the basic scheme of Philip the Chancellor was complimented by an accumulation of further insights and enriched by the Thomist formulation of grace and nature as two entitatively disproportionate and coordinated orders.

**D.2 Conversion and Charity**

In the following analysis, I will attempt to use the various points of comparison as a means of illustrating the advance of Aquinas over Augustine. The first point of comparison concerns the relation between the grace of conversion and subsequent graces. Augustine, in his mature theology, distinguishes four operative graces: conversion (faith), charity, perseverance, and beatitude. According to Augustine, the grace of charity cannot

---

60 Ibid. 17
61 Ibid. 17
inhabit the will without the requisite preparation. So the grace of conversion prepares the will to receive the gift of charity. In his *Confessions*, Augustine calls the reader’s attention to the acute and prolonged discord between his intention and his performance. The temporal succession of conversion and charity is, in Augustine’s understanding, instantiated in the life of St. Paul. According to Luke-Acts, there is an interim between Paul being struck down by God, which signifies his conversion, and the restoration of his sight, which signifies the gift of charity. Even in his own experience, his will, vitiated by the effects of sin, for a considerable duration, was powerless to devote itself entirely to what by faith he had known to be true. In other words, in his own recollection, he receives the faith of conversion prior to receiving the gift of charity. Augustine works out his theology of grace within a narrative framework; accordingly, he understands the grace of conversion and the grace of charity as distinct moments in a temporal sequence. Patout Burns remarks that, for Augustine, “A person’s own opposition to the gospel is first overcome by the gifts of this hearing, and then he is excited to virtue.”

Aquinas also speaks of the gift of conversion as a distinct and preparatory grace. In that sense, Aquinas retains Augustine’s basic distinctions and his ordering of graces. But while Augustine considered the reception of charity in relation to his own psychological experience of readiness, Aquinas conceives the preparatory work of conversion as an instance of a more general metaphysical law. The methodological divergence yields significant results. Aquinas conceives the relation of charity and the will on the analogy of form and matter. More specifically, he uses the reception of an accidental form by a material substrate as a model for understanding the infusion of

---

63 Ibid. 154 (emphasis mine)
charity into the will. In the initial stage of the argument, Aquinas enumerates a set of laws that regulate the acquisition of new forms. Aquinas asserts that the matter in question must be properly disposed. Moreover, the length of time required to build up a disposition is determined both by the extent to which matter is resistant and the power of the disposing agent. Aquinas goes on to argue that since the power of God extends to infinity, the resistant principle in matter is effectively nullified; therefore, it is possible for God to instantaneously develop the proper disposition to receive the form of charity. By implication, God need not infuse the preparatory grace of conversion into the person at some prior point in time. Rather, since God can generate the proper disposition of the will simultaneous to the infusion of the form of charity, God can simultaneously infuse both the grace of conversion and the grace of charity. While Aquinas retains the priority of the grace of conversion as a means of preparation, he conceives the priority of conversion as a logical (or onto-logical) not a temporal priority. In the estimation of Aquinas, while God can, he need not, grant conversion and charity at two distinct moments in time. In the Thomist view, the temporal priority of conversion over charity becomes one possibility within the providential wisdom of God. Therefore, the shift to metaphysical analysis allowed Aquinas to overcome certain limitations of the Augustinian paradigm.

D.3 Charity and Perseverance

The second point compares the relation between the grace of charity and the grace of perseverance. Augustine distinguishes graces on the basis of their locus on a temporal

---

64 According to Aquinas, the grace of conversion is the proximate condition for sanctifying grace and the remote condition for charity. Augustine does not distinguish sanctifying grace and charity like Aquinas distinguishes them; so for the sake of comparison, sanctifying grace was omitted from the discussion.

65 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 2 q. 113, a. 7.
continuum. But aside from these relative designations, Augustine establishes an intelligible correlation between certain graces on the basis of merit. The operative grace of conversion, according to Augustine, merits the grace of charity; and until his encounter with Pelagius, Augustine conceived the grace of perseverance as free choice cooperating with the gift of charity. But the exigencies of controversy forced Augustine to conclude that, in the words of Patout Burns, “the degree of charity which a person can receive without the beatific vision empowers and inclines him to love and choose the good; but taken alone it does not guarantee performance, especially against the opposition of the world and the flesh.” So in the year 418, Augustine reconceived the grace of perseverance as an operative grace modeled on the grace of conversion. This insight allowed Augustine to develop an analogy of proportion between two distinct sequences of grace. As the grace of conversion merits the grace of charity, so also the grace of perseverance merits the grace of beatitude. Furthermore, as the grace of conversion is bestowed without prior merit, so also the grace of perseverance is imparted “without regard for prior good merits,” including the good merits won by previous graces. While Augustine formulates an intelligible connection between the grace of conversion and the grace of charity, and, between the grace of perseverance and the grace of beatitude, there is ostensibly no intelligible relation between the conversion-charity sequence and the perseverance-beatitude sequence, save the divine decision. In other words, the only link between charity and perseverance is the will of God.

Instead of formulating multiple graces as a series of discrete gifts, Aquinas thinks about distinct graces as component elements in a supernatural order. Aquinas elaborates
an analogy based on his conception of nature; consequently, the relations among the multitude of graces become proportionate to the relations among the multiple components in the order of nature. For Aquinas, the essence of the rational soul is the ground of its intellectual and volitional potencies; the potencies are the condition for the operations of understanding and willing; and given the intentional character of rational operations, intellectual and volitional acts regard objects. Now inasmuch as a soul is good, it becomes the ground of virtues; such virtues or good habits are the proximate source of a recurring sequence of good acts; and this recurring sequence of good acts merits a kind of natural beatitude. Aquinas uses this scheme, at least initially, to distinguish grace from the theological virtues. Grace, meaning primarily sanctifying grace (gratia gratum faciens), is radicated in the essence of the soul, while the habit of charity is radicated in the will. As the essence of the soul is understood to be the principle of its potencies, likewise sanctifying grace is understood to be a principle of the habit of charity; as habits are the source of a recurring sequence of acts, so also the habit of charity is understood to be the source of a recurring sequence of charitable acts; and as acts are related to objects, so charitable acts attain God—and not merely God, but God uti in se est. As a good life merits natural beatitude, so also a life of charity that attains God merits supernatural beatitude.

Additionally, nature is teleological. It is ordered to an end. It confers a determinate orientation upon an entity. In more detail, it is a principle or source of operations that serves to realize a goal or set of goals specified by the essence. In other words, human nature acts for an end, namely, a kind of beatitude proportionate to its

---

68 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 2 q. 110, a. 3.
formal properties. In a similar way, sanctified nature—a human nature infused with the habit of sanctifying grace—acts for the end of supernatural beatitude. Aquinas explains,

Now from this it is clear that the virtue of a thing has reference to some pre-existing nature, from the fact that everything is disposed with reference to what befits its nature. But it is manifest that the virtues acquired by human acts of which we spoke above (55, seqq.) are dispositions, whereby a man is fittingly disposed with reference to the nature whereby he is a man; whereas infused virtues dispose man in a higher manner and towards a higher end, and consequently in relation to some higher nature.  

In this view, nature is the remote source and habits are the proximate source of acts that attain a kind of natural beatitude; so sanctifying grace becomes the remote source, through the mediation of charity, of the meritorious activity sufficient to attain a supernatural beatitude.

Charity becomes the proximate cause of a series of meritorious acts; in other words, it is the proximate cause that grounds ‘perseverance’ in the Augustinian view. For Aquinas, much like Augustine, charity does not automatically produce good decisions. While the infusion of charity properly orients freedom, individual choices still require that God operate directly on the will to ensure that it withstands the overwhelming pressures of the ‘world and the flesh.’ Lonergan summarizes the Thomistic argument as follows:

God alone is fully proportionate to Goodness and Truth, and so only God is absolutely impeccable. Accordingly, impeccable operation is possible to man only when he is accorded the beatific vision, when God alone is the source and principle of his entire activity. It follows that no habit or set of habits can make man’s operation absolutely right, for no habit or set of habits is equivalent to God himself, who alone has the property of absolutely right action. Finally, since the condition of this life normally excludes the beatific vision, it is necessary to combine the alternatives of

---

69 Aquinas, Summa Theologiae 2. 1 q.110, a. 3.
internal change and external intervention, to add divine motions to infused grace.\textsuperscript{70}

While the habit of charity reduces the probability of sin, it does not eliminate it; so in addition to the habitual gifts of charity and sanctifying grace, according to St. Thomas, God issues a stream of actual graces to secure perseverance and fix beatitude for the elect. Therefore, instead of two distinct sequences of grace bridged only by the mystery of divine election, Aquinas expresses an integrated scheme of grace—a kind of supernatural ecology of graces and virtues. The gifts of charity and perseverance do not simply have a clandestine relation in the mystery of the divine will but become, in the theological perspective of Aquinas, two integral components in a dynamic structure of graces and virtues that work in tandem to promote the end of supernatural beatitude. The succession of divine motions or actual graces that collectively is termed the grace of perseverance facilitates the work of charity in advancing the end of glory. Like ordinary human nature, sanctified nature tends towards an end. Within this teleological perspective, it is only fitting to bestow the sufficient actual graces, to those whom God has elected, as a means of actualizing the end to which the gift of sanctifying grace bears an ontological orientation. In other words, since sanctifying grace is both the proximate cause of the supernatural virtues and, through the mediation of charity, the remote cause of the acts that merit supernatural beatitude, it is fitting for God to grant sanctifying grace and charity with the adequate graces to persevere that bring the inchoate perfection infused into the essence of the soul to its fruition in the eternal life of glory.\textsuperscript{71}


\textsuperscript{71} Augustine holds the position that it is entirely possible that God grant the grace of charity and deny the grace of perseverance and glory. According to Patout Burns, “The significant anomaly in Augustine’s division...is the calling of some to grace but not to glory. Unlike the unrepentant simulators whom he
Thinking about the bestowal of grace as the implementation of a supernatural order enabled Aquinas to express an intelligible link between the gift of charity and the gift of perseverance. Aquinas develops a more systematic account of grace precisely because he is able to derive a controlling analogy from the order of nature. For Aquinas, God works in and through secondary causes to bring about his will in the natural order; grace is no exception. As God is the direct and immediate cause of all causal series in the order of nature, so God is the direct and immediate cause of the causal series of graces and virtues in the supernatural order. Thus, Aquinas understands divine election as an instance of the more general law of divine providence.72

D.4 Healing and Elevating Grace

The third point of comparison pertains to the function of grace in general. From the Augustinian vantage point, grace is the divine solution to the problem of sin. Driven by apologetic concerns, Augustine worked out his theology in response to the Pelagian problematic. In other words, the Pelagians set the terms of the problem and its describes as weeds among the wheat during the Donatist controversy, these are transferred into the Christic economy. They are converted to faith in Christ and freed from the sin of Adam in Baptism. They receive the gift of charity and perform some good works. Yet they do not persevere in good; they fail and are condemned for their personal sins…God causes neither the perseverance nor the failure of the non-elect. Augustine insisted that the case of the Christian who is not elected to glory is no more mysterious than that of the infant who is condemned for the sin of Adam alone.” (Burns, The Development of Augustine’s Doctrine of Operative Grace,180). Like Augustine, in the *Summa Theologiae* q.109, a. 10, Aquinas claims “to many God grants grace to whom he denies perseverance;” and by grace, here, Aquinas means sanctifying grace—the principle of charity. But in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book III chapter 159, Aquinas quotes Timothy who claims that God “wills all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” To explain why all men are not saved, Aquinas makes the case, in chapter 161, that men put impediments in the way of God’s grace, and that God chooses to remove some impediments and not others in accordance with His wisdom. But the impediments of which he speaks pertain to the grace of conversion. In this passage, impediments mean a willed resistance to the grace of conversion and not the grace of perseverance. So according to this passage, some men are saved and not others, NOT because God gives some sanctifying grace and charity while denying them perseverance but because he chooses to overcome the resistance to conversion in some but not in others. Divine election, in these passages, pertains not to a denial of perseverance but to a denial of the grace that overcomes the resistance to the grace of conversion, for which human beings are chiefly responsible. See also *Summa Theologiae, prima pars*, on divine providence.

---

corresponding solution. Pelagius and his followers were not concerned with grace and nature in the abstract but with grace and liberty in the concrete sphere of human decision. For this reason, Augustine tended to think about grace primarily as ‘healing’ grace.

Aquinas, on the contrary, was occupied by a more theoretic set of concerns. Aquinas and his scholastic contemporaries were interested in finding a way to adequately understand the gratuity of grace. The operative question for Aquinas was not ‘how can grace liberate human liberty?’ but ‘what grounds the distinction between the gratuity of grace and the gift of creation?’ By establishing a theorem of grace based upon the idea of nature, Aquinas was able to achieve an abstract perspective that answered the question by expressing the reality of grace as an entitatively distinct supernatural order with its own proportionate end.

So the order of nature, in scholastic understanding, was not concrete but abstract.

The breakthrough to an abstract perspective allowed for a teleological conception of nature. Conceiving the order of nature in terms of the principles, habits, and acts that promote a kind of natural beatitude demands a method that prescinds from the concrete, historical instances of nature. According to Lonergan,

> the whole problem lies in the abstract, in human thinking: the fallacy in early thought had been an unconscious confusion of the metaphysical abstraction ‘nature’ with concrete data which do not quite correspond…[the] achievement was the creation of a mental perspective, the introduction of a set of coordinates, that eliminated the basic fallacy and its attendant host of anomalies.73

---

73 Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas* 17. In modern physics, the rate of falling bodies is established as 9.8 meters per second/ per second. However, this represents the rate at which bodies fall under ideal conditions (in a vacuum). In all concrete cases, air resistance slows down the rate of the fall. But the development of an ideal, abstract, mental perspective is extremely useful. Similarly, in the field of modern psychology, there is talk of personality types. Due to the complexities of the psyche, no one person perfectly fits any one type. But the development of an ideal type in psychology aids the psychologist in identifying certain behavioral trends, diagnosing certain problems, and prescribing certain treatments. Likewise, in historiography, historians use ideal types such as ‘Neo-Platonist’ or ‘Ascetic,’ while acknowledging that no one person perfectly represents the ideal.
Elaborating a view of pure nature, even though it never exists outside the context of sin and grace, allows one to understand more precisely the impact of sin and grace on human nature. The question ‘what is nature, in itself, apart from sin and grace?’, was not raised in the writings of Augustine because the notion of theology as a science modeled on Aristotle’s method of demonstration was not yet developed. In the concrete, human nature is either turned away from its supernatural end or is able to attain its end only by means of divine assistance. De facto, human nature is either sinful or graced. Aquinas prescinded from the concrete and developed a perspective that enabled him to conceive of grace as a distinct order of being beyond the order of nature. Since the telos towards which the sanctified nature proceeds is supernatural and disproportionate to the end of nature, grace, in Aquinas’ understanding, not only serves a sanative but also an elevating function. More specifically, grace heals by elevating nature to a level of participation in the divine life, which it would otherwise never attain. Even if, in some of Augustine’s sermons, he speaks of grace as a kind of deification, he does not have in mind what Thomas has in mind by supernatural elevation.

Moreover, the analogical conception of grace allows Aquinas to spell out the precise meaning of this elevating function. For Aquinas, as nature grounds natural operations as their remote and proportionate principle, so sanctifying grace remotely grounds a flow of supernatural operations. Since intentional acts, for Aquinas, make

---

Such types are used to classify and understand given figures and enable one to perceive more clearly certain trajectories of thought within intellectual history.

74 In his Posterior Analytics, Aristotle’s method of demonstration requires a grasp of the essence. In demonstration, one knows simpliciter. This is what he means by ‘episteme haplos.’ It refers to a conclusion which applies universally because it originates from a grasp of the essence. Aristotle says that “a thing is noble or base simpliciter if you will say (sc. Truly) without adding any qualification that it is noble or the opposite; e.g. you won’t say that sacrificing one’s father is noble, but that it is noble for certain people—therefore it is not noble simpliciter. Hence whatever seems to be noble or base or anything else, without adding any qualification, is called so simpliciter. (Aristotle, Posterior Analytics Top B 10, 115b 29-35, translated by Jonathan Barnes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.)
objects present to rational consciousness, and, in particular, acts of love make the beloved present to a lover, the supernatural elevation of grace, as the ground of charitable operations, becomes a condition for a real divine presence in the human heart.75 Therefore, grace, in scholastic terminology, as radicated in the essence of the soul, effects an accidental modification on the basis of which there occurs a pneumatic indwelling and a “participatio divinae bonitatis.” The analogy with nature not only enabled an insight into the elevating function of grace but also allowed Aquinas to understand the link between grace and the self-communication of God to the human heart. In short, the abstract perspective afforded him the tools to intellectually ground a theology of divinization.

D.5 Operative and Cooperative Grace

The idea of grace as an ordered series of habits and acts has implications for an understanding of operative and cooperative grace. Sanctifying grace is a principle of esse and operari.76 That is, as a supernatural habit rooted in the essence of the soul, it effects a qualitative change in the soul—a change in being. But, as the remote ground of meritorious acts, it is also a principle of operation. In the instance of sanctification, the essence of the soul is both caused and principle of causation. One can consider the soul as being informed by a habit and also as a principle of further acts. If one considers the soul as informed by the gift of God, the habit of sanctifying grace is an operative grace. If one considers the informed soul as habituated principle of further acts, then the habit of sanctifying grace cooperates with the soul to produce meritorious activity. It is one and the same habitual grace that is both operative and cooperative. Sanctifying grace is

75 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1 q. 3, a. 4.
operative inasmuch as God infuses a new habit into the soul; sanctifying grace is cooperative inasmuch as the newly habituated soul becomes the principle of sanctified operations. For Aquinas, this insight is applicable to actual grace as well. Inasmuch the will is moved by God to produce good actions, actual grace is operative; inasmuch as the will is, at once, both moved by God and the human being is moving towards an end, actual grace is cooperative.77 In light of Aquinas’ established scheme, one and the same habitual grace is both operative and cooperative, and one and the same actual grace is both operative and cooperative.78

**Concluding Remarks**

77 When a teacher uses chalk to write on a chalk board, he must first bring the chalk and the board into the right relation before he uses it as an instrument to express ideas. The teacher operates on the chalk to bring it into right relation to the board and then cooperates with the chalk to produce writing. In being used as an instrument, the chalk not only remains a piece of chalk but realizes its purpose; in being used as an instrument, the chalk becomes more chalk-like. Both Aquinas and Augustine understand God’s operation on the will in the same way. God operates on the will to make it good and cooperates with the will to produce good decisions. The will is no less a will in being used as an instrument; in fact, it is more free in being moved towards its end. But in contrast to Aristotle’s understanding, Aquinas conceives the will as an active potency. So the will, by definition, is self-moving. In the case of grace, God causes the will to move itself towards its goal. It is both moved and self-moving; both caused and free.

78 Augustine eliminates the idea of an autonomous free response to God’s grace, but nonetheless retains the idea of human cooperation. While Aquinas’ writings on cooperative grace repeat the insights of Augustine, he is able, through an adaptation of the insights of Aristotelian physics, to theoretically ground, more effectively, the co-existence of a freedom in which the will is moved and not moving, and, a freedom that freely cooperates with God’s grace. In addition, Aquinas’ theory of instrumentality was able to conceive a cooperative habit. For Aristotle, every terrestrial motion implies a pre-motion; every causal relation requires a motion that brings mover and moved in the right relation, proximity, or brings about the right disposition for the motion to naturally arise. For Aristotle, contingent motions implied prior motions *ad infinitum* and could not be attributed to the causality of the prime mover; since chance contingencies within the terrestrial sphere are, within the Aristotelian paradigm, unintelligible, the prime mover is not responsible for their occurrence. Instead, such occurrences are reduced to prime matter. Aquinas, on the other hand, has established the theorem of divine transcendence. God transcends both necessity and chance. In light of this insight, God is conceived as the artisan of history. All events, both necessary and contingent, including all motions and pre-motions, for Aquinas, have their origin in the will of God. God applies all agents to their activity; this includes the will no less than any other agent in the terrestrial sphere. (see Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 75, ff.) Lonergan illustrates the idea with the following analogy: “Suppose Peter to stand sword in hand and then lunge forward in such a way that the sword pierces the Paul’s heart. In this process there are only two products: the motion of the sword and the piercing of Paul’s heart. But while the products are only two, the causations are three: Peter causes the motion of the sword; the sword pierces the heart of Paul; and, in the third place, Peter causes the causation of the sword, for he applies it to the act of piercing and he does so according to the precepts of the art of killing. The sword is strictly an instrument, and its very causation is caused.” (Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom* edited by Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2000) 88). The idea of God using the will as an instrument applies to both acts and habits.
As evidenced by the forgoing comparative analysis, the theology of Aquinas enjoys several advantages over its intellectual predecessors. Its conceptual schemes are fixed by a series of insights derived from scientific methods and principles. Consequently, its set of inter-related propositions answer a comparatively broader range of relevant questions. It reflects a grasp of things not in relation to senses and feelings but of things in relation to each other; its correlations are not based on narrative or doctrinal but necessary or immanent reasons; its insights have a broader application; it enables the resolution of more problems and grounds an ordered sequence of further relevant questions and insights; in addition, its network of terms and relations reflects more nuanced and subtle distinctions and admits a wider range of implications. Lastly, it renders possible the coordination of disparate fields of speculation in a more synthetic and comprehensive viewpoint.

The theologies of Augustine and Aquinas, however, do not relate in dialectical manner but as successive phases in a developmental process. Aquinas retained Augustine’s basic distinctions and ordering of graces. He retained the basic structure of

---

79 The shift from necessary to immanent reasons emerged in the thirteenth century when St. Thomas worked out a theorem of divine transcendence. The shift in horizons achieved in the elaboration of a theorem of divine transcendence effected a radical re-orientation of theological questions. For example, when St. Thomas addresses the questions regarding the Incarnation, he was not seeking a necessary reason but rather, the reason why it was appropriate for God to become incarnate, suffer, and die for sin. In other words, the theorem of divine transcendence enabled Aquinas to conceive of divine wisdom in relation to historical consequences outside the categories of necessity and chance. It enabled him to think about the consequences of divine wisdom as instances of *convenientia*. It was this pivotal intellectual achievement that made it possible to speak about divine reasons, especially the reason for the Incarnation, as neither necessary nor capricious but still fully intelligible. St. Thomas, unlike St. Anselm, is seeking not a necessary reason but an immanent reason. The transition from Anselm to Aquinas reveals a shift in the criteria for theological understanding. St. Thomas draws a distinction between hypothetical and absolute necessity. If God wills x, then x necessarily is. But God need not will x. God is not compelled by the demands of his own nature to will a certain world, namely, the ‘best possible world.’ Contingency does not get swallowed up by ‘necessity.’ That is, Aquinas is able to preserve real contingency within the framework of divine providence. Furthermore, not only events but even causal series bear a contingent status. This enabled St. Thomas to preserve the notion of necessity within the context of contingency. If event P occurs, then event q necessarily follows. However, event p is not necessary but only contingent. Therefore, God wills the causal series p-q as a contingent not a necessary series.
merit. He retained the compatibility of freedom with divine election and sovereignty. That is, Aquinas like Augustine conceives of human freedom in a way that excludes autonomy. Finally, he preserves the idea of the need for a direct and unmediated operation of God on the will. In that way, both stress the divine initiative. But while Aquinas retains the insights of Augustinian thought, he enriched their meaning and enlarged their significance by using them in the development of a more systematic and quite elegant treatise on grace.

While Augustine chiefly works out the distinctions and ordering of graces in an autobiographical context, Aquinas fully transcends the limitations of existential description. In other words, Aquinas successfully transposed the Augustinian theology of grace from the psychological context of narrative to the more explanatory context of first philosophy. Being able to consider the issue of divine favor within the nuanced framework of scholastic metaphysics allowed Aquinas to work out a more theoretical and scientific understanding of grace. The theology of Aquinas fully conformed to the ideals of a scientia subordinata on an analogy with Aristotle’s ideal of episteme.

E. The Contemporary Transition: A New Scientific Ideal

Due to the medieval appropriation of Aristotelian science, syllogistic argument, as expressed in the Posterior Analytics, became the benchmark for measuring intellectual progress; and so the cultivation of scientific understanding became synonymous with the development of a kind of logical expertise. The scholastics, in the words of Lonergan, distinguished different meanings of the same term, and [they] defined each meaning. [They] reduced propositions to their presuppositions and worked out their implications. With meanings fixed by definitions, with presuppositions and implications fixed by the laws of logic, there resulted what used to be called eternal verities…

Medieval science, especially in the late scholastic period, was content to assume its universal and necessary postulates and axioms and deduce its conclusions in a series of abstractions that, in its more decadent phases, tended to minimize the importance of experience and preclude the acquisition of new data. At this time, the natural sciences occupied a subordinate place under the hegemony of a metaphysics at the apex of a subaltern hierarchy. Modern empirical method was revolutionary with its introduction of experimental verification as a more adequate criterion for knowledge. It was this procedural turn to experiment and ‘experience’ that led to the liberation of the natural sciences as autonomous enterprises. The advent of the new method, which aimed not at apodeictic certainty but at increasing degrees of probability, meant inevitably a polarization of natural science and metaphysics. Given the new epistemic norms, metaphysical propositions were considered to be no more than hypotheses that required verification. The ‘turn to the inner experience of the subject,’ inaugurated by the works of Descartes, emerged not as an exercise in skepticism but as a philosophical attempt to reinstate the legitimacy of metaphysics by elucidating a domain of interior consciousness in which its claims could be verified. Though the Cartesian project failed, it was not because the ‘turn to the subject’ is an invalid starting point but because the method of hyperbolic doubt with its corresponding techniques of self-discovery was a mistaken means of carrying it out.

Twentieth century theologians, living in the wake of the scientific revolution, were faced with a challenge similar to the one faced by Descartes. The so-called “personalist turn” or “turn to the subject” in contemporary theology was an attempt to
understand and communicate the truths of the faith in a new set of terms that resonated less with the abstract and detached language of scholastic metaphysics and more with the concrete terms of personal experience. For instance, Karol Wojtyla, in his monumental work, *Love and Responsibility*, expressed the basic teachings of *Humanae Vitae* not in the natural-law terms derived from metaphysical analysis, as did Paul VI, but in the existential and affective terms derived from an innovative phenomenology of human sexuality.

What about grace? The doctrine of grace had long been expressed in the language of scholastic metaphysics. Was it possible to express the medieval theology of grace in terms of human experience? The procedure of scholastic metaphysics begins with an awareness of objects as its initial set of data and proceeds through a series of deductions to an apprehension of the soul and its potencies. Since the concept of an ‘essence of the soul,’ in which sanctifying grace is received, results from inferential reasoning and is not experienced in the immediate data of consciousness, the technique proper to the scholastic method leaves no room for an experience of sanctifying grace. The idea of an experience of grace lies beyond the ambit of a thirteenth century ‘science of the soul.’ For it would require, in terms of the stage of meaning proper to scholastic theology, an experience of a supernatural gift received in the inner-most essence of the soul and its potencies; and according to scholastic science, there is no direct and immediate experience of the soul.

An experience of what the scholastics meant by grace involves a breakthrough to a realm of interiority in which one becomes aware of the inner-most depths of the “soul.” Such a breakthrough requires a move beyond the “logical” techniques of medieval
science to the “introspective” techniques of transcendental method. Both Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan employed the technique of introspection in their transcendental methods as a means of searching for the experiential equivalents of the basic terms and relations of scholastic metaphysics. But is an experience of what the scholastics meant by the soul and its potencies even possible? Do the realities to which the terms ‘soul’ and ‘potencies’ reference lie within the field of this inner experience? In other words, to what extent can a transcendental method verify the distinctions of scholastic metaphysics in the contents of interior consciousness? How does one even go about exploring the interior domain of consciousness? And what does introspection really mean?

E.1 Transcendental Thomism: The Shift from Soul to Subject

Transcendental Thomism distinguishes intentional acts and intended objects. Intentional acts are operations of the mind such as, perceiving, imagining, questioning, understanding, weighing and marshalling evidence, judging, deliberating, deciding, communicating, etc. Intended objects are the contents made present through those intentional acts. Take the example of perceiving a red shirt. My act of perceiving a red shirt intends, makes present, or makes me aware of the intended object, namely the red shirt; my act of understanding the reality of a circle makes present, makes me aware of, make me conscious of the intelligibility of a circle, and so forth.

While metaphysical reflection on the soul begins with a consideration of intended objects, transcendental reflection, in the style of Lonergan and Rahner, begins with a study of intentional acts. Traditional Thomism starts with the metaphysical consideration of the objects of mental acts and proceeds to an understanding of the self through the objects; the more phenomenological method of introspection attends to the acts
themselves and attempts to notice or advert to what else, aside from the objects, appears in one’s field of awareness when one performs them.

The scholastics, who conceive metaphysics to be first philosophy, begin by focusing all attention on what is known, and only subsequently come to discover the knowing self; the self, in metaphysical terms, is the remote principle of its own acts. Patrick Byrne remarks that “remote is a pretty odd way of speaking about selfhood; but that is inevitable if one follows the method of De Anima: if one begins metaphysically with [objects and] acts it takes a while to get back to the soul. Phenomenologically, of course, this priority is reversed.”

The phenomenological method of Rahner and Lonergan begins by attending to the subject or self that becomes present to consciousness by means of the knowing. So the discovery of the knowing self is not last but is in some sense first in the order of discovery.

So what else, aside from the objects, does appear in the field of awareness when one intends objects? In the opinion of the transcendental Thomists, through an intentional act, one becomes conscious not only of a particular object but also of the acts themselves as well as the subject, the one performing the acts. Lonergan says that “whenever any of the operations are performed, the subject is aware of himself operating, present to himself operating, experiencing himself operating.” In this view, carefully attending to what appears in consciousness when one performs mental acts reveals not only an object and the act itself, but also an acting subject; the subject or self, then, is experienced in all activities as the one performing them.

---

82 Lonergan, Method in Theology 8.
Let me give an example: when one reads the words on this page, the act of
reading makes present the object, my words; but that is not all. One is simultaneously
aware of being engaged in an act of reading and, if he attends carefully, of a self, a
subject, doing the reading. The subject—the core of the self—is transcendental in the
sense that it becomes present to us as a perduring component of our conscious awareness.
Is this an experience of what the scholastics meant by soul or are the terms soul and
subject naming entirely different realities? Soul and subject both refer to the reality of
the self considered from different points of view. Soul refers to the object reached by a
series of deductions within the context of metaphysical reflection; subject refers to the
very same reality not as the term of inference but as experienced in the field of
awareness.

But if what is meant by ‘subject’ resides in the ordinary field of my awareness,
why does one require a special technique to find it? If what I am identifying is present in
every human act, as part of my inner experience, then my description should resonate
with your experience. Why, then, am I going to such great lengths to point it out? If the
‘subject’ or self is given in consciousness, why is it so notoriously difficult to notice? It
is because, according to Frederick Lawrence, “…awareness has to itself not only the
dimension of explicit, foreground awareness, but a tacit or background dimension—
namely, the most radical presence of ourselves to ourselves…”83 The presence of the
subject, as a kind of radical self-presence, remains in the “background” so to speak. The
subject is not an object of attention but what one is aware of implicitly in the
“background” as the one attending to certain objects. Lonergan remarks,

---
83 Frederick Lawrence, “Lonergan and the Post-Modern Concern for the Other,” Theological Studies 54
There is the presence of the object to the subject, of the spectacle to the spectator; there is also the presence of the subject to himself, and this is not the presence of another object dividing his attention, of another spectacle distracting the spectator; it is presence in, as it were, another dimension, presence concomitant and correlative and opposite to the presence of the object. Objects are present by being attended to; but subjects are present as subjects, not by being attended to, but by attending… If one sleeps and dreams, one is present to oneself as the frightened dreamer. If one wakes, one becomes present to oneself, not as moved but as moving, not as felt but as feeling, not as seen but as seeing.84

As one reflects on my words, while his attention is fixed on the object of reflection, namely my ideas, in the very act of reflection, he becomes present to himself as reflecting. The ideas that he reflects on are the objects in the foreground of awareness, the objects upon which attention is fixed, while the self, as reflecting, becomes present as a peripheral element in consciousness. According to Lonergan, “the object is present as what is gazed upon, attended to, intended. But the presence of the subject resides in the gazing, the attending, the intending. For this reason the subject can be [self] conscious, as attending, and yet give his whole attention to the object as attended to.”85 In fact, I only become present to myself as subject when I am attending to an object. That is, I become present to myself as the one actively doing the attending. Even if I try to make myself the object of my reflection, I become present to myself not as the questioned, the understood, the named, but as questioning, understanding, naming. That is, in the activity of reflecting on myself, I become present to myself not as an object of reflection but as the one performing the activity of reflecting. If I, in turn, choose to make the ‘self doing the reflecting’ an object of reflection, then once again, I elude such objectifications, and become present to myself not as what is focused on, reflected on, attended to, but as

85 Lonergan, Method in Theology 8.
focusing, reflecting, attending. For this reason, Frederick Lawrence says “[the subject] can never be made explicit exhaustively.”86 The subject as subject can never be made an object of direct focus. It remains in the background, so to speak, as a pre-linguistic and pre-conceptual self-presence that accompanies all activities.

Peripheral vision can serve as an analogy for the inability to objectify the subject in a complete sense. Once we turn our attention to what is sensed in the periphery, there is yet another set of phenomena in the periphery. One can never exhaust the peripheral since, in every direct vision, there will be a peripheral experience. Just as in peripheral vision, phenomena are experienced but not always noticed, so also in the performance of intentional acts, the presence of the subject is experienced but rarely adverted to. Just as I can take notice of the peripheral even while my focal awareness is directed to an object in front of me, so also I can take notice of my peripheral self-presence while fully focused on an intentional object. But the analogy has limitations.

How does one notice or advert to this peripheral presence of the subject? If consciousness is understood on the model of perception, then the self-reflexive exercise of becoming self-conscious amounts to a kind of inner look. But as Lonergan says, “Inward inspection is just myth. Its origin lies in the mistaken analogy that all [conscious] events are to be conceived on the analogy of ocular vision…”87 For Lonergan and Rahner, consciousness is not perception but simply the range of awareness; so introspection is not a matter of taking an inner look as the etymological sense of the

---

word suggests\textsuperscript{88} but instead, involves a heightening of awareness in the performance of intentional acts. Since the subject is a primordial datum of awareness, I cannot put forth an argument to try to prove it. It is a reality each person must discover for himself; more precisely, it is a reality that each person must notice within his field of awareness. It’s about adverting to an experience, not arguing for a concept. For this reason, the first few chapters of Rahner’s \textit{Foundations of Christian Faith} and Lonergan’s \textit{Insight} should be read less like the proofs of a rational argument and more like an invitation to a set of spiritual exercises.

\textbf{E.2 Excursus on Transcendental Thomism and Kant}

Those unfamiliar with Transcendental Thomism tend to associate it with the transcendental method of Immanuel Kant. But the transcendental Thomists bear little more than a nominal connection to the critical Idealism of Kant, and their methods should be sharply distinguished. Kant’s method was not, properly speaking phenomenological; he was not concerned with what is given in the field of consciousness when one performs certain rational operations. So unlike the transcendental method of Rahner and Lonergan, Kant’s technique for discovering the self is not a matter of ‘adverting’ to the tacit self-presence appearing in the background of our conscious awareness, but a matter of ‘postulating’ certain \textit{a priori} concepts as the necessary conditions for knowledge. For Kant, \textit{a priori} concepts are transcendental; for Rahner and Lonergan, part of what is transcendental is a pre-conceptual awareness of self—not postulated as the term of a train of discursive thought but experienced as a radical self-presence that accompanies all

\textsuperscript{88} When one looks at an object, one is not only conscious of the object, but also the act of looking. But being conscious of the act of ‘looking,’ does not involve one in the activity of looking at one’s looking; rather, it means taking notice or becoming aware of one’s act of ‘looking’ whenever one looks. One is aware or conscious of an act of looking, but one cannot look at an act of looking. Therefore, consciousness or awareness is not synonymous with perception or taking a look.
human activities. Furthermore, from the Kantian perspective, what is transcendental in the subject is a set of concepts that structure intuition and place limitations on knowledge. These transcendental elements are not open to the noumenal and thus restrict cognitive access to metaphysical realities. On the contrary, Rahner, and to no lesser extent Lonergan, understands the transcendental subject in terms of the vorgriff, which is a dynamic and unrestricted openness that reaches out towards the totality of being. In this view, the transcendental subject becomes the fertile ground that makes possible an ongoing and unrestricted apprehension of the universe of being.

Moreover, Kant assumes incorrectly that experience is synonymous with a kind of sense perception or intuition; and on that basis denies the possibility of an awareness or intuition of the self. But since Kant believes that metaphysical claims require verification in immediate intuition, the scholastic concept of soul, since it cannot be intuited, becomes relegated to a realm of speculation without epistemic value. Thus, the transcendental method of Kant led to the proverbial “death of metaphysics.” Rahner and Lonergan, by distinguishing consciousness and perception, were able to realize that an exploration of conscious experience is not a matter of taking an inner look but rather, a matter of heightening one’s awareness, much as occurs in the Ignatian practice of spiritual discernment. The method illuminated a field of interiority, and gave Rahner and Lonergan access to a set of conscious data that allowed for an experiential verification of scholastic distinctions.

E.3 ‘Grace as Experience’ and its Consequences for Theology

In terms of scholastic theology, sanctifying grace is a quality infused into the essence of the soul. Since the term ‘subject,’ as a radical self-presence, means in
experiential terms what ‘essence of the soul’ means in metaphysical terms, an experience of sanctifying grace will be an experience not of some kind of object or act but of a certain quality of self-presence. In terms of transcendental Thomism, grace is experienced as a quality of the tacit and background self-presence of which our encounters with the world make us aware. More specifically, Lonergan describes this quality of self-presence as “a dynamic state of being-in-love in an unrestricted fashion.” The experience of grace means that, through all human activities and encounters, one becomes aware not simply of objects in the world but becomes present to oneself as unrestrictedly in love. It means that while the encounters of Mother Theresa made her focally aware of persons and objects, she became present to herself, in her charitable and in her mundane activities, as being in love without limitations. Experiencing grace is a matter of becoming aware, in the depths of consciousness, of a peace, joy, and fulfillment beyond measure. As an experience of a serenity and peace that the world cannot give, it is an experience of the supernatural—of something other-worldly, of a radical gift.89 Lonergan goes on to provide a more robust description of the experience of grace. He says,

Because [it is] conscious without being known, it is an experience of mystery. Because it is being in love, mystery is not merely attractive but fascinating; to it one belongs; by it one is possessed. Because it is an unmeasured love, the mystery evokes awe. Of itself, then, inasmuch as it is conscious without being known, the gift of God’s love is an experience of the holy, of Rudolf Otto’s mysterium fascinans et tremendum. It is what Paul Tillich named being grasped by ultimate concern. It corresponds to St. Ignatius Loyola’s consolation that has no cause, as expounded by Karl Rahner.90

89 The article ‘a’ in the phrase ‘a radical gift’ is, perhaps, misleading. As a quality of self-presence, sanctifying grace, once transposed into the categories derived from an intentionality analysis, becomes an awareness of the subject as subject (the background awareness of self) not the subject as object. Insofar as the article ‘a’ designates an object, it is misleading.
90 Lonergan, Method in Theology 106.
As a peripheral kind of experience, sanctifying grace is conscious without always being noticed; and so, adverting to one’s presence to oneself as being-in-love in an unrestricted fashion involves a heightening of conscious awareness in the performance of human activities, especially prayer, worship, and spiritual practice.91

But what are the implications for theology? Adverting to a direct and immediate experience of sanctifying grace through introspection would enable the theologian to access a fuller set of experiential data on grace—a set of data on the basis of which to further develop the Christian understanding of grace. It would especially contribute to an understanding of the relationship between nature and grace, which is expressed, in Thomist terminology, as two distinct orders of being. The idea of two distinct orders of being answered the question, ‘how do you distinguish grace and nature as gifts?’ But the question regarding the precise inter-action between grace and the human subject lies beyond the purview of traditional Thomism. Answering the question about the exact manner in which grace informs the person requires a direct and immediate apprehension of grace as it operates in the depths of the human reality.

Lonergan and Rahner use the distinctions of scholastic theology in their methods of introspection. By distinguishing and naming various metaphysical components, the scholastics gave Lonergan and Rahner a clearer sense of what they were searching for in their exploration of consciousness. As Aquinas presupposes and uses the basic insights of Augustine in the development of more scientific account, Lonergan and Rahner retain and employ the basic insights of Aquinas in the development of a more contemporary

---

91 The primary means of heightening awareness and bringing to light an experience of grace as grace is by living a Christian life informed by Revelation. For both Rahner and Lonergan, one does not experience grace as grace apart from Revelation.
scientific account. My contention is that what Aquinas did for the medieval theology of grace, Rahner and Lonergan did for a contemporary theology. Aquinas successfully appropriated the ideals of Aristotelian science without adopting the paganism of which his contemporaries were so suspicious. Likewise, Lonergan and Rahner appropriated the ideals of empirical science without reducing the reality of grace to an empirical or natural phenomenon. As such, transcendental Thomism contributes to the overall project of Vatican II, which might be summarized, to use Lonergan’s publication of Leo XIII’s phrase, “Vetera novis augere et perficere.”

In addition, the project of Rahner and Lonergan has implications for the contemporary reception of scholastic theology. Scholastic theology has become in the eyes of post-modern theology, a quaint fact of history without relevance to systematics, which is concerned with a correct understanding of the truths of the Faith. By clarifying the ways in which scholastic distinctions can be verified in the data of Christian experience, Rahner and Lonergan have helped revive the credibility of scholastic theology as a source of authentic Christian wisdom in a post-Kantian fideistic milieu.

---

92 One can speak about the contemporary turn to an experience of grace as a critical retrieval of the Augustinian description of grace in experiential terms. Both projects attempt a descriptive account of an experience of grace; but while Augustine operates in the context of common-sense, the contemporary description is more scientific. The contemporary scientist, through his refined techniques and instruments, can access a fuller set of data and can notice within that data more distinctions because his horizon is more differentiated. So Rahner and Lonergan, having the benefit of scholastic distinctions, can notice more in consciousness.
Chapter II
From the Second to the Third Stage of Meaning:
The Problem of Transposition in the Thought of Bernard Lonergan

The first chapter implemented a genetic method to chart the developments in the history of the theology of grace. The last section of that chapter sketched the basic contours of a development that enabled a transposition from the second to the third stage of meaning—a development that made possible a description of grace in terms of consciousness. While Lonergan expresses grace as a fifth level of consciousness or as being-in-love unrestrictedly and intermittently spells out in very brief and general terms what it would mean to experience grace, he does not describe in full detail what being-in-love unrestrictedly would mean in terms of interior consciousness. The second chapter will address the question of grace and consciousness in the context of Lonergan’s thought. In this chapter, I will bring to light the complexities and challenges of identifying and describing grace as a datum of human experience; I will also attempt to offer the Lonergan scholar some guidance by developing a set of normative criteria that will assist him in navigating these complexities and surmounting these challenges. The chapter is not an exercise in foundational theology but will be written from a dialectical and methodological viewpoint. Firstly, it will provide a synopsis of the conversation among Lonergan scholars about the correct transposition of a theology of grace.’ Secondly, it will clarify the problem of transposition and attempt to work out a heuristic solution in Lonerganian terms. Thirdly, it will offer an abridged dialectical consideration of six interlocutors within the conversation. The special and general terms and relations developed and clarified by this chapter will be employed in the third chapter to work out, in Lonergan’s categories, a more robust description of grace as an element in human
consciousness in order to compare it with the experiential account of grace in the writings of Karl Rahner. The dialectical and methodological work of the second chapter will prepare for the foundational task of the third chapter.

A. The Problem in General Terms

The transition from the second to the third stage of meaning requires a “transposition” of the scholastic theology of grace. For Lonergan, the task requires that one begin “not from a metaphysical psychology, but from intentionality analysis, and, indeed, from transcendental method.”

According to Lonergan, difficulties abound because the theologian “may be looking for something with a label on it, when he should simply be heightening his consciousness of the power working within him and adverting to its long-term effects.” While the theologian should “simply be heightening his consciousness,” discovering and identifying grace as a distinct datum of interior experience is, by no means, a simple affair. How does one go about distinguishing, for example, what a theoretical theology referred to as sanctifying grace in consciousness? Is there a term in intentional or non-intentional consciousness that corresponds to what a theoretical theology called the ‘habit of charity’? If so, can the conscious correlate of the ‘habit of charity’ be distinguished in experience from the conscious element that corresponds to ‘sanctifying grace’? Is the distinction real or notional? In the mid 1990s, Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies published a series of articles that attempted to answer these questions. In the last couple of years, after what appeared to be a decade long hiatus, Lonergan scholars, both in journal essays and in conferences, began to revisit these same questions. Not only has this ongoing discussion failed to reach a consensus

94 Ibid. 290.
but, over the years, it raised more questions than it resolved. The diversity of opinions, which only seems to increase with each new conversation partner, testifies to the challenges inherent in the procedure of transposing grace from a theoretical to a methodical theology.

**B. Synopsis of the Conversation**

The following section will summarize and compare the opinions of six distinct interlocutors within the conversation. It will be written as the first phase of a dialectical consideration of these authors. For Lonergan, “dialectics has two levels. On an upper level are the operators. On a lower level are assembled the materials to be operated on… before being operated on, the materials have to be assembled, completed, compared, reduced, classified, selected.”95 This section of the chapter, inasmuch as it collates and relates opinions, will correspond to “assembly” and “comparison” in the list that Lonergan enumerates. As such, it will be descriptive not evaluative.96

*Robert Doran*

Initiating the conversation about the correct transposition of the scholastic theology of grace in a 1993 article entitled “Consciousness and Grace,” Robert Doran argues that the real distinction and relation between what a theoretical theology called sanctifying grace and the habit of charity can be verified in the immediate data of consciousness. For Doran, the distinction between sanctifying grace and the habit of charity is grounded in Trinitarian relations. Sanctifying grace is the contingent term that corresponds to active spiration, while the habit of charity is the contingent term that

---

96 Given the above-downwards vector of human development, ‘pure’ description may not be possible—a description in a value-free context. Therefore, description is never ‘mere’ description; it takes place within a horizon. As such description assumes evaluation. But the process can be called descriptive and not evaluative because it seeks to assemble the facts.
corresponds to passive spiration. According to the hypothesis of contingent predication, the distinct gifts do not effect a change in God but rather a change in the creature. In terms of its effects, sanctifying grace can be defined as an accidental modification of the essence of the soul on the basis of which there occur acts by which God is attained \textit{uti in se est}. Doran argues that, in terms of consciousness, these contingent terms manifest as two distinct experiences: an experience of ‘being loved’ by God, and, an experience of ‘being in love’ with God. In Doran’s interpretation, what a theoretical theology named sanctifying grace corresponds to is an experience of ‘being loved’ by God whereas the habit of charity corresponds to an experience of ‘being in love’ with God.\footnote{See Robert M. Doran, “Consciousness and Grace,” \textit{Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies} 11 (1993) 62.} In his later article “Revisiting ‘Consciousness and Grace,’” Doran expresses ‘being in love’ with God more precisely as the “freedom to love [God] in return.” In his view, both the theoretical terms and the \textit{relations} have conscious correlates. For Doran, not only does the real distinction between sanctifying grace and the habit of charity correspond to the really distinct experiences of ‘being loved’ and ‘being the source of love,’ but the scholastic idea that sanctifying grace \textit{grounds} the habit of charity corresponds to the experience of being loved \textit{as} an empowering source of a freedom to love God in return.\footnote{See Doran, “Revisiting ‘Consciousness and Grace,’” \textit{Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies} 13 (1995) 156.}

Michael Vertin was the first to challenge Doran’s thesis that ‘being loved’ by God is experienced as a distinct datum of consciousness. In “Revisiting ‘Consciousness and Grace,’” Doran did nuance his thesis to meet Vertin’s objections. About this experience of sanctifying grace Doran says,

\begin{quote}
…what I am speaking of is conscious but not \textit{known}, in the sense of the full human knowing that consists in experience, understanding, and judging. Perhaps it is best known through the revelation that is manifest in
\end{quote}
But despite the reformulation of his thesis, Doran still maintains, nevertheless, that one can experience ‘being loved by’ God as the prior source for a ‘love for’ God. The conscious distinction and relation between ‘being loved by’ and ‘love for’ God is, for Doran, the proper way of transposing the real distinction and relation between sanctifying grace and the habit of charity.

Michael Vertin

Michael Vertin, echoing the approach of Doran, takes gratia elevans as a starting point for thinking about the meaning of grace in a methodical theology. Following Lonergan’s clues in Method in Theology, Vertin, in his 1994 essay “Lonergan on Consciousness,” claims that grace enriches, transforms, and sublates intentionality so that 

…operations of understanding, of making judgments of fact, and of evaluating and deciding are not ordinary operations but religious ones, operations both motivated and oriented and normed by the feeling of unrestricted being in love. And what I know and choose by means of those operations is manifest as not simply the intelligible, the real, and the good but—more amply—the holy.\textsuperscript{100}

For Vertin, the intentional acts of a person infused with grace are not fifth level acts that flow from a distinct notion of ‘love’ apart from the other notions and they do not attain fifth level objects beyond the ordinary objects attained by operations within the field of the other four levels; rather, in this view, divine love elevates intentionality by enabling ordinary operations to “manifest the holy” in and through intending ordinary objects. In other words, by virtue of the agapic datum, as Vertin describes it, “the transcendent:

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid. 157-158.
notions of goodness, reality, intelligibility, become notions of holiness.”\textsuperscript{101} Therefore, Vertin denies the thesis that the infusion of grace into the essence of the soul produces a fifth level of consciousness, in the strict sense. But while the infusion of grace does not produce a fifth level of consciousness, Vertin insists on a \textit{prior consciousness} of this “agapic datum” as a gift that enriches and transforms ordinary operations. According to Vertin, “unrestricted being in love,” otherwise called the agapic datum, can be described in terms of consciousness as “the awareness-content of an act that is wholly non-intentional, purely conscious, an act whose content is totally identical with the act itself.”\textsuperscript{102} Speaking about the priority of this experience, Vertin remarks, “\textit{First} I experience this perfect act-content identity as something radically other that nonetheless is given to me, a gift; and \textit{then} I take personal possession of it by making it the proximate stimulus, guide, and criterion of my own operations of knowing and loving.”\textsuperscript{103} But for Vertin, unlike Doran, although there is a real distinction between the gift as such and the subsequent operations that flow from the gift, there is, in his own words, “no real difference between my experience of the gift of being loved unconditionally and my experience of the gift of being in love unconditionally.”\textsuperscript{104} The experience of grace, for Vertin, amounts to “an unlimited…” and presumably undifferentiated “act of conscious loving and being loved.”\textsuperscript{105} Vertin goes on to argue that, in fact, “the real distinction is not where Doran places it but between the gift of my being loved and loving without restriction, a gift that I experience, \textit{and} my particular acts of loving”\textsuperscript{106} By calling into

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid. 24
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid. 31
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid. 32 (emphasis mine).
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid. 30.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid. 32.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid. 33 (emphasis mine).
question Doran’s conscious distinction between ‘being loved by God’ and ‘loving’ or ‘being in love’ with God, Vertin challenges the endeavor to transpose the real distinction between sanctifying grace and the habit of charity into the terms derived from interiority. It is unclear whether or not Vertin maintains a notional distinction, at the level of experience, between ‘being loved unconditionally’ and ‘being in love unconditionally.’

Tad Dunne

Dunne’s 1995 essay, “Being in Love,” speaks to the possibility of experiencing what Doran would refer to as the conscious correlate of sanctifying grace—‘being loved without restriction.’ Dunne, in harmony with Vertin, argues for the impossibility of identifying an experience of ‘being loved unrestrainedly’ as distinct from an experience of ‘being an unrestricted source of love’ for God. But Dunne goes further and denies the claim that one experiences any gift of divine love prior to and distinct from particular acts of love. In his personal and anecdotal style, Dunne writes, “I realized that my love for God is the quintessential evidence that God must love me too.” While Vertin argues that the agapic datum is experienced previously and distinctively in relation to an experience of particular acts that it releases, Dunne brings to light the example of Paul who “first experienced loving God and neighbor and only subsequently realized that this experience is, and always was, identical to being loved by God.” By “subsequently realized” Dunne means that the assertion of being loved by God is not a description of an interior experience but inferred from a set of data made present by particular acts of charity. For

---

107 It is unclear whether or not Vertin attends to his own experience and denies the distinction or reads into the data of consciousness what seems to be a metaphysical analogy drawn from theorem that speaks of an identity between sensing and sensed in act or intelligence and intelligible in act.
109 Ibid. 170.
110 Ibid. 173.
Dunne, being loved by God is an experience, but an experience mediated by an act of judgment. Dunne draws an analogy with human love to illustrate his point: “I had to believe the people who told me [my family and friends] loved me. It was not an experience of being loved ‘as such.’ I had to realize, in a real assent, the truth of the proposition that they loved me. This realization is a judgment.”<sup>111</sup> ‘Being loved without restriction’ is not a description of a conscious state in the realm of immediacy but the expression of the content of a judgment—“It is an act of faith, a judgment of value born of religious love.”<sup>112</sup>

*Patrick Byrne*

Thus far, the conversation chiefly focused on the possibility of identifying the conscious correlates to what the scholastics referred to as sanctifying grace and habit of charity. While Doran makes a case for a distinct experience of ‘being loved unrestrictedly,’ Vertin and Dunne contend that ‘being loved unrestrictedly’ cannot be singled out as a distinct datum of consciousness. Though Vertin and Dunne disagree with Doran about the possibility of experiencing what the scholastics meant by sanctifying grace as a distinct datum of consciousness, both assume that Doran’s expression ‘being loved unrestrictedly’ is the proper way of describing sanctifying grace in the language derived from interiority. It was Robert Doran, then, who fixed the terms of a discussion that expanded, over the next two years, to include the voices of Michael Vertin and Tad Dunne. But in 1995, an article entitled “Consciousness: Levels, Sublations, and the Subject as Subject” revolutionized the discussion by challenging the shared presupposition of Doran, Vertin, and Dunne. In this article, Patrick Byrne argues

---

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. 170.
<sup>112</sup> Ibid. 170.
that while there is, in fact, a conscious manifestation of what a theoretical theology called sanctifying grace, it is not an experience of ‘being loved unrestrictedly.’ In a broad sense, Byrne begins where the others begin, with the first thesis of Lonergan’s *De ente supernaturali*: “There exists a created communication of the divine nature, or a created, proportioned, and remote principle whereby there are in the creature operations through which the creature attains God as God is in God’s own self.” As Byrne accurately remarks, “The basic difficulty in effecting the transposition is making sense of the term, ‘remote principle,’ from the viewpoint of intentionality analysis. What does the term mean?” According to Byrne, one needs to “prescind from questions of grace for the moment, and ask ourselves, ‘How is this language of substance/nature, remote/proximate principles to be transposed when the operations are acts of consciousness?’” Byrne then ventures an answer that becomes the key to his entire transposition:

‘Substance’ becomes ‘the subject as subject,’ precisely as present-to-self in Lonergan’s third sense of presence. ‘Nature,’ on the other hand, is ‘the self as present-to-self’ on one or another of the levels, and as such, the principle of acts of that level’...This amounts to saying that self-as-present in one of its modes is the proximate principle of the accompanying acts; but the self present to self just as such is the subject as subject, the subject as a self-present unity, identity, whole, and as such is the remote principle of its own acts.

By re-casting the problem in terms of self-presence and, more precisely, modes of self-presence, Byrne elaborates a new heuristic for thinking about grace in a methodical theology. In other words, for Byrne, the solution to the problem of transposition will be

114 Ibid. 147.
115 Ibid. 147.
worked out in terms of the modal variations in the conscious self-presentation of the subject as subject. Byrne then offers the following transposition:

If this hypothesis is correct, then it might be that there is another ‘formal but not material’ distinction between sanctifying grace and the supernatural habit of charity. Sanctifying grace would be the experience of self-present-to-self as unrestrictedly being in love; the habit of charity would be the experience of self-present-to-self as unrestrictedly being in love as the patterning continuity to a series of acts of charity.\footnote{Ibid. 148.}

While he commends Doran’s effort and supports his conviction, against Vertin and Dunne, that one can transpose the ‘created and remote principle,’ Byrne, in concert with Vertin and Dunne, contests Doran’s thesis that ‘being loved unrestrictedly’ describes a distinct datum of human consciousness. Byrne, commenting on Doran’s expression, says

I happen to prefer Lonergan’s phrase, ‘being in love in an unrestricted fashion,’ and would prefer to conceive of Doran’s phrase, ‘experience ourselves as loved unconditionally and invited to love in return’ as derivable, modeled on the way Lonergan derives Heiler’s characteristics of world religions. That is to say, ‘being in love in an unrestricted fashion’ at least suggests to me the image of being undifferentiately immersed in love, like a crystal clear vessel immersed in a crystal clear sea. Only subsequently and with great effort are the subtle distinctions worked out between the self who is present to self in unrestricted loving, the unrestricted loving itself, and the One with whom one is in love.\footnote{Ibid. 148-149.}

Since ‘self-present-to-self as such’ versus ‘self-present-to-self as’ intelligent, reasonable, responsible, etc. expresses a formal not material distinction within the unity of interior experience, Byrne seems to endorse a notional but not a real distinction between the conscious correlates of sanctifying grace and charity. For Byrne, the real distinction, articulated by Doran, between an experience of sanctifying grace and an experience of
the habit of charity is not part of the data of consciousness, as data, but represents a subsequent objectification of the data.

Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer

In an essay entitled “Grace in a ‘Methodical Theology,’” appearing in a 2007 publication of *Theological Studies*, Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer makes an attempt to identify and name the conscious experience that corresponds to sanctifying grace. For the most part, Jacobs-Vandegeer defends the direction taken by Byrne and remarks that “the key to the entire transposition [is an] emphasis on the subject as subject.”118 Jacobs-Vandegeer concurs with Byrne, against Doran, that ‘self-present-to-self as unrestrictedly in love’ is the proper way of transposing sanctifying grace into the terms and relations derived from interiority. But in harmony with Doran, he repudiates Byrne’s rejection of a real distinction between sanctifying grace and the habit of charity in consciousness. While Jacobs-Vandegeer does not transpose the habit of charity into the terms and relations of interiority, remaining relatively agnostic about what it would look like, he is nevertheless committed to the idea that, whatever it does look like, it will not contradict the metaphysical distinctions of a theoretical theology. In a lengthy footnote that digresses from his main argument, Jacobs-Vandegeer addresses the point of divergence between himself and Byrne:

The problem arises from his use of the terms, ‘remote and proximate principles.’ He understands them according to the ‘formal but not material’ distinction that Lonergan applied to the difference between substance and nature. On this basis, Byrne proposes a ‘formal but not material’ distinction between habitual grace and charity as the respective remote and proximate principles of supernatural acts of love. However, the distinction between remote and proximate principles corresponds to the distinction between substantial and accidental orders; and, with regard to the former, even inseparable accidents ‘involve a generically different

...modus essendi.' In short, all constitutive ontological components—substantial and accidental potency, form, and act—are really distinct from one another.  

According to Jacobs-Vandegeer, the notional distinction between self-as-present-to-self as such and self-as-present-to-self as operating in one of its modes, while accurately representing the substance/nature distinction, is not congruent with the substance/potency distinction. In the theorem of the supernatural, the distinction between sanctifying grace and the habit of charity is analogous to the real distinction between a substance and its potencies, and not to the notional distinction between substance and nature. Since the assertion of a merely ‘notional or formal difference’ between sanctifying grace and charity is not consonant with the distinctions yielded by the scholastic analogy of proportion, Jacobs-Vandegeer opposes Byrne and insists on a real distinction in consciousness between an experience of habitual grace and an experience of the supernatural virtue of charity.

J ohn Wilkins

In a paper that bears the title “The Transition from a Theoretical to a Methodical Account of Grace” delivered at the Lonergan Workshop in June of 2007, Jeremy Wilkins tried to work out, in the terms and relations of a critical theology, the distinction and relation between sanctifying grace and the habit of charity. Wilkins explains that, in the writings of St. Thomas, “two related but distinct analogies are introduced to explain why (sanctifying) grace is distinct from an infused virtue. First, grace stands to the infused virtues as esse to operari...Second, grace stands to the infused virtues as the light of

119 Ibid. 69.
120 A real distinction may be either major (A is not B) or minor, as in the distinction between person and nature.
What is novel in the approach of Wilkins, I think, is his use of this second, less familiar, analogy as a heuristic framework for thinking about the meaning of grace and the supernatural virtues within a methodical theology. Aquinas, he says, introduces the second analogy to specify how the analogy of grace as conferring a new nature is to be understood: it is a principle of movement like the intellective part of the soul, not like the lower parts. As such it operates the development of the infused virtues which, like the acquired virtues, are subject to the laws of development.

The way to proceed would be to figure out what in a critical metaphysics corresponds to ‘a principle of movement that operates the development of the acquired virtues’ so that one can establish a critically grounded analogy for sanctifying grace and the habit of charity. Lonergan expresses the reality of ‘development’ in terms of ‘operators’ and ‘integrators.’ Given the context of a critical metaphysics, one can raise the question: how does one understand the relationship between the ‘light of reason’ and the ‘virtues’ in terms of the dynamic relations of ‘operator’ and ‘integrator?’ For Wilkins, the ‘light of reason’ corresponds to the ‘detached, disinterested desire’ that operates the development of the person. The virtues, in a critical metaphysics, function as integrators that might be expressed as “circles of schemes of recurrence of skills and feelings, where the feelings support sustained self-transcendence and the skills group the relevant operations for successful performance in various domains.”

On this showing, if the dynamic state of being in love names an antecedent willingness and orientation, perhaps what is called the habit of charity is

---

122 Ibid.
123 Ibid.
embedded in a flexible circle of schemes of recurrence among judgments of value, decisions, etc., and similarly the habit of faith is embedded in a circle of schemes of recurrence among judgments of value grounding the decision to accept testimony, etc. In both cases, the basic condition—the remote operator—for the infusion and the survival of the schemes is being in love.  

Finally, in light of his analysis, Wilkins attempts to answer some of the questions that have emerged from a consideration of grace within a methodical theology. One such question asks whether there is a real relation between grace and charity. Wilkins seems to answer this question in the affirmative. Since Wilkins conceives habits as integrating schemes of skills and feelings, there will be as many integrators as there are sets of skills and feelings; furthermore, he conceives grace to function like the unity of the detached and disinterested desire; and since one detached and disinterested desire gives rise to a multiplicity of skills and feelings as it promotes the subject through successive transformations, being in love as a unified and singular operator guides the formation of a plurality of integrating schemes. In his own words, “If one operator stands behind the formation and development of several really distinct integrators, it follows that the reality of the operator is really distinct from the reality of the integrators.” But while Wilkins holds that a methodical theology will be able to ground a real distinction between the transposed equivalents of sanctifying grace and the habit of charity in the context of metaphysics, he denies the possibility of identifying the habit of charity in the immediate data of consciousness. He explains,

Subjects, their conscious states, their conscious operations, and the procession of one operation from another are all conscious. A habit, on the other hand…is not an immediate datum of consciousness; its existence is inferred from the consistent, prompt, and joyful performance of the

124 Ibid.
125 Ibid.
pertinent conscious operations…The conscious element that corresponds to the existence of the habit is not the *habit*; it is the grasp of the virtually unconditioned grounding an affirmative judgment with its borrowed content.  

For Wilkins, once grace and the habit of charity are transposed into their respective correlates of ‘being in love as unified operator’ and the ‘integrating schemes of relevant skills and feelings,’ one can raise and correctly answer the further pertinent questions about the habit of charity: It is not conscious because, as habitual, schemes as such are not conscious. It is really distinct from sanctifying grace because it stands to sanctifying grace as several schemes of skills and feelings stand to a singular detached and disinterested desire. Wilkins’ voice in the conversation is unique. While he denies that one can apprehend the habit of charity in the immediate data of consciousness, he claims that there are rational warrants to affirm a real distinction between what a methodical theology means by the habit of charity and sanctifying grace. Therefore, Wilkins position is not a full transposition in Lonergan’s sense, but a critical re-formulation of the metaphysics of grace.

**C. The Question of ‘Transposition’**

In the preceding section, I presented six different solutions to the same problem. The reason the conversation has not yet reached an agreement is that each theologian operates with a different understanding of what it means to ‘effect a transposition.’ Unless these theologians prescind from questions about the content of the transposition and begin to raise and consider the meta-question about ‘what it means to effect a transposition,’ they will be unable to develop the normative criteria required to adjudicate between competing claims and move towards a real solution. For most theologians

---

126 Ibid.
operating in the functional specialty “foundations,” the ‘meaning of transposition’ has not been made an explicit topic of study. In other words, though they attempt a correct transposition, they do not reflect on ‘the conditions that need to be satisfied in order to transpose ‘grace’ correctly.’ But as the conversation expands to include more voices and the dissonance becomes more apparent, some theologians have begun to realize the need to think about the notion of ‘transposition.’ In a 2007 publication of *Theological Studies*, Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer began to detail a criteria for ‘transposing the scholastic account of grace;’ and at the 2007 Lonergan Summer Workshop, Jeremy Wilkins spent a few paragraphs of his essay clarifying what it means, in general, to execute a transposition.

*Jacobs-Vandegeer on ‘Transposition’*

In his, “Sanctifying Grace in a ‘Methodical Theology,’” Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer offers a couple of “guideposts” for the theologian who intends to transpose grace from a theoretical to a methodical theology. First, he comments on the starting point of the transposition. Following the guidelines of a passage in *Understanding and Being*, Jacobs-Vandegeer thinks that one can begin with either the data of consciousness or the scholastic metaphysics of grace. Lonergan himself indicates that one can...begin from knowing. But one can [also] begin with the metaphysics of the object, proceed to the metaphysical structure of the knower and to the metaphysics of knowing, and move on to complement the metaphysics of knowing with the further psychological determinations that can be had from consciousness. From those psychological determinations one can move on to objectivity and arrive at a metaphysics. One will be completing the same circle, except that one will be starting a different point...As long as one completes the circle, the same thing will be said, but it will be said at different points along the line.127

---

Jacobs-Vandegeer uses Lonergan’s circle metaphor to think about the starting point for the transposition of ‘grace.’ One can begin with an intentionality analysis or one can begin with the scholastic metaphysics of grace so long as one “completes the circle.” From a methodological standpoint, one must complete the circle because, in the words of Jacobs-Vandegeer, “though interiority analysis gives the critical basis for eliminating misleading metaphysical terms and relations, we may also proceed with the awareness that the insights of an older, theoretical theology may serve as correctives to the oversights of a contemporary, methodical theology.”

What does it mean that the insights of a theoretical theology may serve as correctives to a methodical theology and how does it bear on the discussion of transposition? The insights of a theoretical theology guide one’s investigation in the form of a negative prescription: “an adequate methodical theology will not contradict the basic insights of the theorem of natural proportion.” According to Jacobs-Vandegeer, this is another way of saying “that we may have reason to doubt the accuracy of a description of the interiority of grace if it stands at odds with the theoretical theology of the early Lonergan.” Additionally, he states, “If we keep in mind that much of Thomistic theology remains critically grounded, if only implicitly, we can interpret correctly the meanings of Lonergan’s statements that appear to advocate a strict procedure for the task of transposition.” All this talk leads me to believe that Jacobs-Vandegeer, despite his remark that the “task of transposition surely does not conform to

---

129 Ibid. 76.  
130 Ibid. 56.  
131 Ibid. 55 (emphasis mine).
any kind of straightforward formula,“132 is really advocating something like a one-to-one correspondence between the terms and relations of scholastic metaphysics and the terms and relations of intentional consciousness. In other words, Jacobs-Vandegeer, at least in performance, follows the lead of Robert Doran in his early writings and understands Lonergan’s phrase “for every term and relation…” to mean a kind of point-to-point correlation.133

Wilkins on ‘Transposition’

Taking the discussion in a different direction, Jeremy Wilkins insists that Lonergan’s phrase “for every term and relation...” does not mean a point-for-point correspondence. But if it does not mean a one-to-one correspondence, then what does it mean? According to Wilkins,

…what Lonergan means in Method in Theology is that a critical metaphysics is to be grounded on the isomorphism of knowing and being, the interdependence of the cognitional and ontological orders. Statements about ontological causes require cognitional warrants, and conversely, cognitional reasons require corresponding ontological causes. What is the term in intentional consciousness that corresponds to an ontological cause? It is a cognitional reason, a warrant. The realities denoted by the assigned ontological causes will not necessarily themselves be immediate data of consciousness; rather, they will correspond to insights and judgments.134

Wilkins uses Aquinas’ transposition of Augustine’s less differentiated theology of grace as an analogy for thinking about the transition from the second to the third stage of meaning. He insightfully points out that, “…some features of the less differentiated

132 Ibid. 76.
133 For Doran, the fact that, at the level of interiority, divine love is described as an experience “should not render the theology appropriate to the stage of meaning grounded in interiority less differentiated than the theology appropriate to the stage of theory.” (“Consciousness and Grace,” Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies 11 (1993) 61.) What Doran means by “less differentiated” is that it possesses less “distinctions.” In other words, Doran thinks that a methodical theology, being more differentiated, must possess at least as many distinctions as a theoretical theology. Doran is more explicit than Jacobs-Vandegeer that a transposition requires a point-for-point correlation between a theoretical theology of grace and the immediate data of consciousness.
presentation are simply contextual and fall away in transposition. Such was the Augustinian definition of liberty in terms of the disjunction of servitude to God or servitude to sin.”135

D. The Methodological Starting Point

While both of these thinkers raise the question of transposition, the answers proffered are meager and articulate little more than some ‘negative prescriptions’ or restrictions that cannot, on their own, guide the theologian in his search for the conscious correlates of a theoretical theology. In addition, Wilkins’ position contradicts the position of Jacobs-Vandegeer; and so not only the question about the content of the transposition, but even the question about ‘the criteria for transposition’ generates a diverse range of answers. Both of these thinkers are moving the conversation in the right direction but acknowledge with humility that their answers offer no more than incomplete hypotheses. But how does the theologian accomplish, beyond mere hypothesis, a virtually unconditioned? How can the theologian arrive at a definitive and full-blown set of normative criteria that would settle disputes?

The methodological turn in the history of philosophy can serve as an analogy for thinking about a solution to the problem of transposing ‘grace’ from a theoretical to a methodical theology. In the history of philosophy, the seemingly endless scholastic debates began to raise epistemological questions that were seeking a set of normative criteria that would settle disputes in the area of metaphysics. But modern philosophers answered the criteriological question in diverse ways. In Lonergan’s view, the proper means of resolving these polarities in philosophical thought and cutting through the differences requires a turn to performance. Lonergan explains,

135 Ibid.
The scandal still continues that men, while they tend to agree on scientific questions, tend to disagree in the most outrageous fashion on basic philosophic issues. So they disagree about the activities named knowing, about the relation of those activities to reality, and about reality itself…differences…can be resolved by bringing to light the contradiction between a mistaken…theory and the actual performance of the mistaken theorist.136

Unlike the epistemologist, who asks the criteriological question ‘what are the conditions for the possibility of knowing?’, the cognitional theorist turns to performance and raises the methodological question ‘what am I doing when I am knowing?’ The upshot of the methodological turn is that, from Lonergan’s perspective, “…a critical metaphysics results…Accordingly, empty or misleading terms and relations can be eliminated while valid ones can be elucidated by the conscious intention from which they are derived. The importance of such control will be evident to anyone familiar with the vast and arid wastes of theological controversy.”137 Unless we want the theologians of future generations to refer to these discussions about the ‘correct transposition of grace’ as “vast and arid wastes of theological controversy,” we will need to raise the methodological issue and develop a critical perspective that will allow the theologian to eliminate “empty or misleading terms and relations” and support valid ones in the data of religious consciousness. Not unlike the disputes of scholastic metaphysics, the disputes among the theologians operating in the functional specialty “foundations” can be settled by turning to the performance of the theologian and asking the question ‘what am I doing when I am effecting a transposition?’

As the achievement of the correct metaphysical structure of the known requires answers to prior epistemological questions about the criteria for knowing, so also

137 Ibid. 343.
effecting a correct ‘transposition’ (identifying correctly the conscious correlates of ‘scholastic special categories’) demands answers to prior questions about the proper criteria for transposition; in turn, reaching a set of normative criteria for effecting a correct transposition demands answers to prior methodological questions that ask about the performance of the theologian actually engaged in the activity of transposition. For Lonergan, the turn to the performance of the knowing subject reveals the activity of knowing as a dynamic heuristic structure. While a question does not presuppose the answer, it anticipates the general structure of the known to be grasped. In the knowing process, intelligence lays out a series of conditions that need to be fulfilled in order to affirm a hypothesis as true. When rational consciousness elaborates these requisite conditions, it establishes a set of immanently generated criteria on the basis of which one grasps further relevant data, manipulates the appropriate images, raises more pertinent questions, and marshals and weighs the evidence. Intelligence, when it functions well, deploys a set of standards that guide, orient, and direct the search for answers. In other words, a person makes correct judgments to the extent that he is able to accurately articulate the set of conditions that would need to be fulfilled in order to verify a given hypothesis. In a similar manner, the theologian operating in the fifth functional specialty “foundations” can execute a correct transposition to the extent that he can specify what conditions need to be fulfilled. The turn to the performance of the theologian engaged in the task of transposition will yield the relevant explanatory criteria for ‘effecting a correct transposition.’ Lonergan assigns this task to the “methodologist.”

In his chapter on “foundations,” Lonergan distinguishes what he calls the task of the methodologist from the task of the theologian. For Lonergan, “The methodologist’s
task is the preliminary one of indicating what qualities are desirable in theological
categories, what measure of validity is to be demanded of them, and how categories with
the desired qualities and validity are to be obtained.”138 He explains further that “The
task of the methodologist is to sketch the derivation of such categories, but it is up to the
theologian working in the fifth functional specialty to determine in detail what the
general and special categories are to be.”139 There is no need here, and it would be
strange, to assume that Lonergan is speaking about two different individuals. The
methodologist and the theologian may be the same person. But operating with a
methodical control of meaning, the theologian prescinds from questions about the content
of the transposition and raises questions about the method of transposition in an effort to
formulate an explanatory heuristic structure or set of criteria that could discriminate
between true and false descriptions of grace in consciousness. In other words, such a
theologian, operating as methodologist, will attempt to anticipate the general features of
the transposed content as a means of guiding the search of the theologian operating in the
fifth function Specialty ‘foundations;’ but also, the delineation of these basic features will
assist the theologian operating in the fourth functional specialty ‘dialectics’ in his task of
evaluating the descriptive accounts or possibly relevant explanatory hypotheses on grace
offered by other theologians. As one would expect, Lonergan stresses the importance of
self-appropriation in these matters:

The derivation of the categories is a matter of the human and the Christian
subject effecting a self-appropriation and employing this heightened
consciousness both as a basis for methodical control in doing theology
and, as well, as an a priori whence he can understand other men, their
social relations, their history, their religion, their rituals, their destiny.140

138 Ibid. 282.
139 Ibid. 291.
140 Ibid. 292.
Presumably, Lonergan is speaking here about the importance of self-appropriation for both theologian and methodologist. Although Lonergan elucidates the basic responsibility of the methodologist and speaks about the importance of self-appropriation in carrying out this responsibility, he does not assume the role of methodologist and actually work out a heuristic that would guide the theologian in his investigation of interior consciousness. That task has been left to his students. But because Lonergan’s comments are both scarce and quite general, they cannot offer much direction to the students who do assume the onus of the methodologist. So where does one begin if one were to assume the role of methodologist and specify “what qualities are desirable in theological categories, what measure of validity is to be demanded of them, and how categories with the desired qualities and validity are to be obtained?” In his later writings, Lonergan speaks of two vectors of human development: the way from below-upwards and the way from above-downwards. Within the bi-directional dynamics of development, there is an upward movement in which the apprehension of data initiates a series of questions and generates a range of insights that serve to correct and modify pre-existing theories. But there is also a downward movement in which prior insights and theories orient one in the gestalt of human experience and enable him to apprehend and pick out relevant data. The activity of identifying the conscious correlates of a theoretical theology has to do with the above-downward vector of development. It involves the use of special scholastic categories to explore the domain of interior experience with a view towards finding their conscious equivalents.

In order, then, to attain a set of criteria for transposing ‘grace,’ Lonergan would seem to recommend that one turn to the performance of the theologian and ask these

\[\text{\footnotesize 141 Ibid. 282.}\]
methodological questions: what am I doing when I employ special scholastic categories in the service of apprehending and describing the data of religious consciousness? Is there, properly speaking, a “method” of transposition. The methodical movement of consciousness that Lonergan describes, which begins in experience and ends with decision, is a realization of the vertical finality that directs and develops the subject from below-upwards. But does it make sense to talk about “a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations, yielding cumulative and progressive results” in the context of a development that moves in the reverse order from understanding (theory) to experience? Is there a set of operations that, if performed, can guarantee a correct identification and description of grace in consciousness? Can one derive from this methodical movement a set of precepts or criteria that will assist the theologian in the ‘foundational’ task of describing the conscious correlates of a theoretical theology, and, in the ‘dialectical’ task of assessing the accounts of other theologians? Since the methodologist intends to elucidate the operations in the theologian that govern the proper interaction of scholastic special categories with the data of consciousness, he will need to get clear on the meaning of ‘consciousness,’ as the data in terms of which one transposes, the meaning of ‘scholastic special categories,’ as the context that is to be transposed, and the precise manner in which ‘consciousness’ as the data in terms of which one transposes is both distinct from and related to ‘scholastic special categories’ as the terms to be transposed.

The methodological turn to the performance of the theologian gives rise to a seriation of questions that ask about the interaction between terms and relations supplied by ‘scholastic special categories’ and the terms and relations gained from the ‘data of consciousness.’ The first question asks about the positive relation between the
metaphysically based terms and relations and the psychologically based terms and relations, generally considered: how do general categories function in the activity of apprehending both the data of sense and the data of consciousness? The second question considers the negative relation between the metaphysically derived terms and relations and the psychologically derived terms and relations: what distinguishes the realm of interiority from the realm of theory as fields of meaning? The third question examines the metaphysically based terms and relations: what are and how does one understand the special theoretical categories? The fourth, fifth, and sixth questions explore the psychologically based terms and relations: what are and how does one understand the relevant general domains of interiority in which the conscious correlates of special theoretical categories will be discovered? How are these relevant domains of interiority made present? How do we understand the conscious data on grace in light of a shift from an abstract to a concrete consideration of the subject?

To ensure that a transposition is carried out properly, the methodologist must ask and answer this set of questions that emerge from a turn to the conscious “interaction” between scholastic categories and the data of consciousness occurring in the theologian operating in the fifth functional specialty. Such questions arise from a turn to the performance or activity of the theologian. The method or normative pattern of related operations that ensure the proper interaction of scholastic categories with the data of consciousness is the pattern of asking and correctly answering these six distinct but related questions. The answers to these questions will specify what the theologian operating in the fifth functional specialty is searching for. The answers will yield an explanatory heuristic for apprehending the transposed content. In other words, these
answers will elucidate the “qualities [that] are desirable in theological categories, what measure of validity is to be demanded of them, and how categories with the desired qualities and validity are to be obtained.” From these answers, the methodologist will be able to articulate the set of normative criteria on the basis of which the theologian can both identify the conscious correlates of a theoretical theology and discriminate between true and false descriptions. The six questions that I propose are not meant as an exhaustive list but as a tentative starting point for one assuming the role of methodologist. These questions are to be asked not once but over and over again. The methodologist can develop, enlarge, and enrich his answers to these questions to the extent that he commits himself more fully to the transcendental precepts: be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible.

E. Answering the Questions

1. How do general categories function in the activity of apprehending both the data of sense and the data of consciousness? In *Method in Theology*, where the above-downward model of development is fully explicit, Lonergan discusses the function of ‘language’ in relation to ‘experience’ and ‘data.’ He writes,

> So it is that conscious intentionality develops in and is molded by its mother tongue. It is not merely that we learn names of what we see but also that we can attend to and talk about the things we can name. The available language, then, takes the lead. It picks out the aspects of things that are pushed into the foreground, the relations between things that are stressed, the movements and changes that demand attention.\(^{142}\)

In a later passage, he continues this theme:

> Data are given to sense or to consciousness. They are the given just as given. They are, of course, hardly noticed unless they fit in with one’s understanding and have a name in one’s language. At the same time, with

---

\(^{142}\) Ibid. 71
Lonergan claims that language can enable one to notice elements in interior consciousness as it enables one to notice aspects within the field of sensation. As a given language or set of categories can allow the person to notice distinct elements within the field of exterior data made present by intentional acts, so also a language or set of categories can direct attention to certain components within the internal data of consciousness made present by the same intentional acts.

2. What distinguishes the realm of interiority from the realm of theory as fields of meaning? Interiority is a realm of immediacy. The contents of the realm of interiority and the contents of the realm of theory become present to the subject by means of intentional acts. But while the contents of the realm of interiority become present to the subject as immediate, the contents of the realm of theory become present to the subject as mediated. In other words, the contents of the realm of theory (sanctifying grace, habit of charity, etc.) become present to the subject as answers to questions. Such contents are mediated by questions and insights. The contents of the realm of interiority (subject, states, acts, etc.) become immediately present by means of intentional acts. The same questions and insights that make the subject known to himself as an answer to a question also make the subject present to himself as an immediate datum of consciousness.

Through the mediation of intentional acts, the subject becomes immediately present to himself, and in a kind of mediated immediacy, present to himself as objectified.

---

143 Ibid. 347-348.
While this immediate self-presence has a content, as a field of meaning, the interior experience is an unstructured and preliminary kind of experience. In his commentary on human consciousness, Lonergan remarks,

consciousness is not just any awareness of oneself and one’s acts, but only that awareness that is preliminary and unstructured…what is known by consciousness is attained not under the formality of the true and of being, nor under the formality of the intelligible and definable, but under the formality of the experienced.\textsuperscript{144}

He goes on to say that

to be conscious of oneself and one’s acts is not the same as attending to oneself and one’s acts. If we were not first conscious, it would be futile for us to try to render our consciousness more clear and distinct by concentrating our attention. That is why it is a serious error to think that consciousness consists not in that preliminary and unstructured awareness that we have spoken of but rather in the subsequent focusing and concentrating of our attention.\textsuperscript{145}

Unlike the contents of interiority, which are given as a preliminary and unstructured experience, the contents apprehended in the realm of theory, since mediated by quite differentiated questions and insights, are apprehended as distinct components in a rational order. The data of consciousness can become present as preliminary and unstructured data in and through the performance of acts; data on the self can also become present in a subsequent self-attention that focuses on the data while one performs acts; finally, data on the self can become present as intelligible, true, and good through the mediation of intelligent, rational, and deliberative questions.

3. How does one understand the special theoretical categories in themselves and in their correlation to distinct elements of consciousness? Some of the special categories are:

\textsuperscript{144} Bernard J. F. Lonergan, \textit{The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ} CWL ??? (Toronto: University of Toronto, ???) 161.

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid. 167.
habitatual grace, actual grace, operative grace, cooperative grace, the habit of charity, the habit of faith, the habit of hope, elevating grace, and healing grace. The section on the scholastic transition in the first chapter explained the special theoretical categories in their relations to each other, and as a result of the movement from the world of common sense to the world of theory. Since the theorem of the supernatural is worked out as an extended analogy of proportion\textsuperscript{146}, understanding it will depend upon understanding the general categories used to express the order of nature, including: essence of the soul, nature, substance, potencies, will, intellect, liberty, habits, acts, objects, instrumentality, proximate and remote causality, primary and secondary causality, premotion, application. One must understand the categories in themselves and in their correlation to consciousness. One must be able to enumerate all of the distinctions, terms, and relations within a theoretical theology that could correspond to the components and states that one identifies in consciousness. Furthermore, understanding the special theoretical categories means grasping their animating questions and the horizon from which they emerged. By recognizing the scope and boundaries of the abstract perspective of scholastic theology, one will come to realize their limitations; one will realize that the categories that explain certain relations within an abstract perspective can neither adequately answer questions about concrete human experience nor correspond in a simple one-to-one relation to elements within the concrete domain of human consciousness.

4. What are and how does one understand the relevant general domains of interiority in which the conscious correlates of special theoretical categories will be discovered? In the theorem of the supernatural, the relation between sanctifying grace and the habit of charity, for example, corresponds to the relation between the essence of the soul and its

\textsuperscript{146} See chapter 1 (34-35)
potencies. In terms of consciousness, ‘essence of the soul’ and ‘potencies of the soul’
correspond to modal variations in self-presence. Such self-presence is the presence of the
subject as subject, not the subject as object. In addition, ‘actual grace’ reduces the will
from potency to act. Therefore, consciousness as preliminary and unstructured in relation
to intentional acts becomes the relevant domain in which one will discover the data that
correlates to what a theoretical theology called actual grace.

5. How are the relevant domains of interiority made present? The subject becomes
present to himself as subject by means of intentional acts. As Lonergan states, “Just as
operations, by their intentionality, make objects present to the subject, so also by
consciousness, they make the operating subject present to himself.”\(^{147}\) By heightening
awareness in the performance of intentional acts, the subject can attend to this self-
presence. Transcendental method allows the subject to attend to his own self-presence
while he performs intentional acts; but, though the subject becomes focally present to
himself in an objectified way, he is at once present to himself not as the object of
intentional acts but as the subject of the acts.

6. How do we understand the conscious data on grace in light of a shift from an abstract
to a concrete consideration of the subject? To attend to oneself as one performs
intentional acts is to gather data not on an abstract but on a concrete subject. From this
perspective, the acts are not conceived abstractly in relation to potencies and the essence
of the soul, but as the movements of a concrete historical subject struggling to achieve
self-transcendence in a world of sin. Gathering conscious data on grace will require that
one attend to intentional acts not in the abstraction of introspective analysis but in the
context of life as it is lived.

F. Inferring a Set of Normative Criteria for Transposition

From the *first* answer, one will expect to rely on the scholastic categories for guidance for a correct transposition; in fact, one will expect to be unable to notice the elements within the field of interiority as distinct elements without the theoretical categories. It will require that one approach the theoretical categories, to borrow Ricoeur’s phrase, with a ‘hermeneutic of trust.’

From the *second* answer, given the disparity between the realm of interiority and the realm of theory as fields of meaning, one will not expect a point-for-point correspondence between the terms and relations of one and the other. While the contents of theory are known under the formality of the intelligible and true, the contents of the realm of interiority are known under the formality of the experienced. Since this experience is preliminary and unstructured, one will not expect to find a “real” distinction in consciousness, if by real one refers to a distinction derived from the context of metaphysics. One will not find a real distinction if the term ‘real’ pertains to the domain of metaphysical contents known under the formality of ‘being.’ One will experience one’s conscious awareness by one’s conscious awareness; one will be attending to the data of consciousness. By inquiring and insight one will understand the data as evidence for the expression of psychological terms and relations that, by being psychological and not metaphysical, will not necessarily correspond to metaphysical terms and relations. In other words, since consciousness as such is preliminary and unstructured, intentional acts make the self and his acts present as an undifferentiated field of meaning.148

---

148 This does not preclude real distinctions if one does not mean real as a term derived from a metaphysical context of meaning. In the appropriation of rational self-consciousness, one is aware of the real distinctions of experience, understanding, and judgment.
From the *third* answer, one will expect a successful transposition to the extent that one correctly understands the scholastic special and general categories in themselves and as clues for what to notice in consciousness. This will involve recognizing the limitations of these categories to adequately speak to concrete human experience. From the *fourth* answer, one will expect to verify distinctions within the data of religious consciousness by attending to modal variations in self-presence and the conscious distinction of the self and its acts. Also from the *fourth* answer, one will expect to discover an experience of grace as a state or as activities of the subject as *subject*. From the *fifth* answer, since the self becomes present to self by means of its intentional acts, one expects that an experience of grace as grace will become present by means of intentional acts. From the *sixth* answer, the identification and description of grace in consciousness will bring to light the subject not as an abstraction but as he concretely is.

Since a human being apart from community is an abstraction, one will expect to attend to an experience of grace in the inter-subjective contexts of worship, family, work, and friendship; moreover, since pure nature is an abstraction, one will expect that a full apprehension and description of grace in consciousness will include a dialectical and genetic component. As Lonergan says, “the data…on the dynamic state of other-worldly love are the data on a process of conversion and development.”\textsuperscript{149} Scholasticism does not possess the language to understand or express adequately the notion of ‘development’ beyond the movement from potency to act, and the ideas of the acquisition or infusion of modifications to potencies formulated as habits or gifts of the spirit. Since a language is required to attend to the data of consciousness, a critical metaphysics will be required to formulate a notion of conversion and development. In order to consider the concrete

\textsuperscript{149} Ibid. 289.
impact of grace on the human person, the theologian will need to express grace in the
critical language of development and conversion and use it to orient his attention in the
field of interior consciousness. One will need to work out an analogy of grace based not
on a scholastic metaphysics of nature but derived from the categories of a critical
metaphysics—one that grounds its terms and relations in the immediate data on the
subject. A critical metaphysics will be able to articulate the subject in his concrete
existence. A critical metaphysics will supply the terms for the questions that direct and
focus attention on the data of religious consciousness. For example, Lonergan expresses
development in the critical language of ‘operator’ and ‘integrator.’ If the data on grace
are data on a process of conversion and ‘development,’ then the theologian will need to
ask: what in terms of consciousness corresponds to the operating and integrating
functions of ‘other-worldly being-in-love?’ These critical questions will bring to light the
relevant domains of interiority and orient the attention of the theologian to the
appropriate data.

Such is the explanatory heuristic framework that will aid the theologian in
identifying the features of grace ‘to be discovered’ in consciousness. The heuristic is, of
course, no guarantee that one will discover and accurately describe grace in
consciousness. Theologians do not operate in a vacuum but within a horizon that
includes biases. By comparison, knowing the activity of knowing does not ensure that
the philosopher affirms truly; one may overlook relevant data, suppress further pertinent
questions, lack the creativity to manipulate the appropriate images, or fail to express
insights adequately. Knowing the activities that constitute ‘knowing’ is not enough; one
has to perform the activities well. One has to conform oneself to the normative process
of knowing. Similarly, knowing the criteria for a correct transposition does not ensure that one will correctly transpose. One must conform oneself to the methodical demands of identifying grace in consciousness. In other words, the criteria for a correct transposition are not only formal but also performative. Following these criteria as a means of discovering grace in consciousness is a way of realizing Lonergan’s transcendental precept: “be attentive.” But in the context of the fifth functional specialty ‘foundations,’ “be attentive” is a challenging demand; and it requires that the theologian resist his temptation to treat grace as an object; it requires that the theologian resist the tendency toward picture thinking and avoid a kind of conceptualism that reads into the data of consciousness the distinctions of a theoretical theology; it requires that the theologian remain with the concrete data of consciousness. In other words, it requires that theologians practice what phenomenology calls *epoche*, instead of assuming a ‘natural attitude’ that, in its naïve anticipations of objectivity in terms of the already-out-there-now-real’ leads one away from the experience as experience. The *epoche* is an integral part of the phenomenological activity of *reduction*, which, as its root words suggest, is an attempt to “lead back” attention from the abstractness of metaphysical speculation to the concreteness of experience—of life as it is lived. The *epoche* is an integral part of the phenomenological activity of *reduction*, which, as its root words suggest, is an attempt to “lead back” attention from the abstractness of metaphysical speculation to the concreteness of experience—of life as it is lived.\textsuperscript{150} The theologian operating in the fifth functional specialty, in his attempt at a phenomenological *reduction*, requires a continual practice or habit of restraint that allows him to “suspend the natural attitude” and attend to grace as a concrete datum in human consciousness. Because of

\textsuperscript{150} The self becomes present to himself when he performs operations in everyday life. One can attend to the undifferentiated unity of the self and its acts that become present in life as it is lived. One can also use a superstructure of categories to attend to the self. With the right language, one can attend to the distinctions in experience which are given in life as it is lived, but not noticed as a real distinction in the metaphysical sense. Real distinctions are given in the data of conscious performance, which is to be understood, identified, and formulated by objectifying acts of inquiry.
our spontaneous extroverted orientation, it is extremely difficult to sustain a focus on the data of religious consciousness. For this reason, theologians who operate in the fifth functional specialty need to practice, perhaps more than theologians operating in other functional specialties, a kind of phenomenological *epoche*. Only to the extent that the theologian builds up these intellectual habits of self-control and perseverance will he be “strong enough to refuse half-measures and insist on complete solutions even though it has to wait.”

**G. A Critique of Six Theological Opinions**

The next section will assess the positions of the six authors presented in light of the criteria established in the preceding section. Having established a set of criteria for assessing these positions, I will proceed to evaluate, which involves an articulation of the strengths and shortcomings of these positions (completion), a reduction of similar positions to an underlying bias (reduction), and a specification of these biases as expressions of dialectically opposed horizons (classification).

**Criterion One: The Starting Point of a Methodical Theology**

---

151 Bernard J. F. Lonergan, “Dimensions of Meaning,” CWL 4 (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1993) 244-245. A phenomenological ‘reduction’ is not incompatible with an attempt to understand and know. For the critical realist, the ‘reduction’ allows one to correctly apprehend the data, which is the first phase in the knowing process. However contemporary phenomenologists such as Jean-Luc Marion believe the natural attitude to be incompatible with the reduction. The problem is that Marion understands the reduction to lead one back to the ‘real.’ If the ‘real’ is apprehended in experience, then understanding is superfluous. It is conceived not as an act that grasps the intelligibility immanent in the data—not as an act that mediates reality—but as an act that obscures and conceals the real by imposing abstract concepts upon it. The combination of naive realism and conceptualism makes it impossible to consider ‘reduction’ and ‘metaphysical speculation’ as compatible activities. One must distinguish, as Heidegger did, between ‘phenomenology’ as a method and as an ideology. As a method, it becomes a useful addition to any philosopher or theologian. As an ideology, especially in some of its more recent permutations, it excludes any attempt to move beyond experience.

152 My procedure will certainly not be as thorough as the procedure Lonergan lays out in *Method in Theology*. As a full dialectical treatment of these authors, I realize that my analysis has a long way to go. What I offer is a beginning.
For Jacobs-Vandegeer, the fact that Aquinas’ theoretical theology is critically grounded authorizes both a “strict procedure” for transposition and gives the theologian the liberty to start either with scholastic metaphysics or intentionality analysis in his transposition as long as one “completes the circle” and returns to the point at which one began. Following Lonergan’s directives in *Understanding and Being*, Jacobs-Vandegeer insists on the importance of “completing the circle.” But what does it mean to “complete the circle?” Why does the strategy require that one come full circle and return to the starting point? In other words, how does a theoretical theology relate to intentionality analysis and enter into the project of developing a methodical account of grace?

According to Jacobs-Vandegeer, the theoretical terms and relations of Aquinas seem to do no more than “serve as correctives to the oversights of a contemporary, methodical theology” that can be worked out on the basis of an intentionality analysis performed in isolation from the theorem of the supernatural. On this reading, it is not, strictly speaking, a requirement to “complete the circle,” but entirely possible for one to begin with intentionality analysis and carry out the demands of a methodical theology without an appeal to scholastic categories at all. Jacobs-Vandegeer justifies this position by citing, with Lonergan, the example of Aquinas. In concordance with Lonergan’s *Verbum* articles, Jacobs-Vandegeer claims that

though Aquinas worked with a faculty psychology in the metaphysical terms of substance, apprehensive and appetitive potencies, habits, and acts, he also grasped his own interior experience as a knower and a chooser. The same applies to Aristotle. Well before the rise of a third stage of meaning, insight into insight occurred, and although the expression of that reflexive grasp entered a theoretical framework, the grasp itself effectively controlled the framework or the theory, not the other way around.  

For Jacobs-Vandegeer, Aquinas did not base his metaphysics of the subject on the method of pre-modern psychology but on an intentionality analysis. That is, he first attended to his interiority and then communicated what he identified in the terms and relations of faculty psychology. The fact that, in the analysis of Jacobs-Vandegeer, Aquinas explored interiority prior to expressing his findings in the theoretical language of faculty psychology means that one can attend to intentional and non-intentional consciousness without the use of the faculty language of pre-modern psychology. It means that, as long as a critical language is available, one can work out a methodical theology apart from and in the absence of the categories and procedures of a theoretical theology. For Jacobs-Vandegeer, the function of scholastic categories in the development of a methodical theology is merely negative. In other words, scholastic language offers a set of correctives or a check that guarantees the accuracy of a description of religious experience that can and should be developed without the assistance of theoretical language. The delineation of theoretical language in relation to a methodical account of grace violates the first of the criteria established in the preceding section. In contrast to the position of Jacobs-Vandegeer, one will expect, for a correct transposition, to rely on the scholastic categories for guidance; in fact, one will expect to be less likely to notice the elements within the field of interiority as distinct elements without the theoretical categories.

According to Lonergan, “Data are given…to consciousness. They are the given just as given. They are, of course, hardly noticed unless they fit in with one’s understanding and have a name in one’s language.”154 While one can be performatively aware of the self without knowing it, strictly speaking, unless one raises the appropriate

questions, can formulate those questions in a language that can specify and anticipate the unknown object, and has at his disposal the proper investigative methods, it is unlikely that one will be able to notice and bring to light distinctive elements within the data of consciousness. Attending to acts as distinct components of consciousness is difficult enough; but the experience of the subject-as-subject presents a greater challenge, not because it is too remote and strange but curiously because, in Lonergan’s words, “one may be too familiar with [this] reality.”\(^{155}\) Scholastic language offers clues for what to notice in consciousness; it allows one to attend to distinct elements within the domain of interior experience, which, as distinct elements, would be “hardly noticed” otherwise. In light of the foregoing analysis, the theoretical language of scholastic theology does not simply offer a set of correctives, but becomes a positive instrument and useful tool in the process of exploring and verifying the reality of grace in human consciousness.

**Criterion Two: A Point-for-Point Correspondence**

While not overt in his writings, Jacobs-Vandegeer seems to imply a one-to-one correspondence between theoretical terms and relations and the terms and relations to be identified in consciousness. In his earlier writings, Robert Doran is even more explicit than Jacobs-Vandegeer about his commitment to the rule of a point-for-point correspondence.\(^{156}\) Jeremy Wilkins observantly points out that

\(^{155}\) Ibid. 290 (emphasis mine).

\(^{156}\) In his most recent 2006 article, “The Starting Point for Systematic Theology,” Doran is less clear about this point. He writes “What a metaphysical theology calls sanctifying grace is the dynamic state of unqualified being in love… [It provides] at the most elemental level of our being (‘entitative habit’) both a given grasp of evidence (understanding) and a gifted affirmation (judgment) on the part of one who is in love in an unqualified fashion and so with God’s own love (experience), gives rise to the habit of charity… [Again,] the entitative habit at its root, then, is a being-in-love. While it is experienced in an elemental and tacit fashion, it manifests itself consciously in the knowledge or, better, the horizon born of that love. (Robert Doran, “The Starting Point for Systematic Theology,” *Theological Studies* 14 (2006) 21). As Jacobs-Vandegeer notes, “The decision to speak in these precise terms opens the possibility for avoiding
The expectation of a point-for-point correspondence has been fostered, in part, by a line from Method in Theology that has become something of a charter statement for the project of transposition: ‘for every term and relation there will exist a corresponding element in intentional consciousness.’

According to the earlier writings of Doran, since a theoretical theology elaborates a real distinction between sanctifying grace and the habit of charity, one will expect that an examination of interiority will reveal not only an experience of sanctifying grace and an experience of the habit of charity as distinct elements of consciousness but will also reveal a real distinction between them. But this contradicts the second criterion established in the preceding section: *given the disparity between the realm of interiority and the realm of theory as fields of meaning, one will not expect a point-for-point correspondence between the terms and relations of one and the other. While the contents of theory are known under the formality of the intelligible and true, the contents of the realm of interiority are known under the formality of the experienced. Since experience is preliminary and unstructured, one will not expect to find a “real” distinction in consciousness, insofar as real distinction refers to the content of a compound judgment about the data. The apprehension of a real distinction results from a series of questions and answers by which one affirms the reality of A, the reality of B, and the fact that A is not B.*

A visual analogy will help clarify the issue. Take, for example, a person seeing a bouquet of red roses and being awe-struck by its beauty. In the moment of awe, what is given is given as a preliminary and unstructured visual field. The color, petals, and

---

157 Jeremy Wilkins, Lonergan Workshop Paper, 2007. Wilkins nicely argues that there are other less obvious ways of interpreting this statement.
aesthetic structure are distinct components given in experience but, at least initially, not noticed as distinct. With the use of names and categories, one can notice the vibrant red within the visual field as a distinct element of experience. Language enables one to attend to distinct elements of experience as distinct. As soon as one considers the beautiful object, a superstructure of language allows one to identify and pick out distinct aesthetic elements within the unified field of awareness; language allows one to distinguish elements that are originally given not as distinct but as undifferentiated parts of a unified visual spectrum. If one were so inclined, one may refer to a major real distinction between the petals and the stem or a minor real distinction between the red and the structural arrangement of petals or a formal distinction between the bouquet of roses as flowers and as decorative, but major and minor real and formal distinctions are not given in the unified field of awareness. Such distinctions are answers to further questions raised about the experience of the bouquet of roses. When one objectifies his experience in terms of these distinctions, he is describing the content of insights about experience; what these distinctions describe is not the bouquet of roses as experienced, but the bouquet of roses as being.

One can generalize the distinctions drawn in this analogy to all data of sense and consciousness. Experience as experience is preliminary and unstructured. This is not to say that distinct elements are absent at the level of experience. Distinct elements are given in experience but not noticed as really distinct. If one attends to one’s experience with the appropriate language, one can notice distinct elements within experience. The subject and her acts are given to consciousness. Without attending to the data of consciousness, the self and her acts become known (not in the strict sense), in
performance, as a preliminary and unstructured experience. With the appropriate language and techniques of self-attention, one can notice distinct elements within one’s experience of self. But in the absence of questions and insights, what one knows when one attends to oneself as ‘subject’ would still be attained under the formality of the experienced. If, however, one asks and answers questions about one’s experience, then what he comes to know would be attained under the formality of the intelligible in terms of understanding and the real in terms of judgment. With the right language, one can attend to the distinction between the subject and its acts. But without asking and answering metaphysical questions, the distinction even between the subject and his acts, though distinctly present in experience, does not become present in experience as a “real distinction.” When referring to the experience of the self, whether or not it is the preliminary and unstructured experience or the experience that one adverts to in transcendental method, “real distinction” is a misplaced term. There may be and, in the case of the subject and its acts, are warrants in the data of consciousness for intelligently understanding and reasonably affirming a “real distinction” between the subject and its acts. This does not mean, however, that the “real distinction” is present as an immediate datum of consciousness; it only means that one can arrive at the “real distinction” through the mediation of questions asked and answered within a theoretical context.

The expectation of a point-for-point correspondence between the terms and relations of a theoretical theology and the terms and relations derived from religious consciousness can be traced to a failure to appreciate the disparity between the domains

---

158 When Lonergan describes an experience of grace as ‘being in love without restrictions,’ he is describing the preliminary and unstructured experience of grace. When Lonergan’s students attempt to transpose grace in a more extensive fashion, they are using a scholastic language to attend to and make explicit the distinct elements that are given within an experience of grace.
of experience and theory as fields of meaning; the expectation that one will, for example, discover a “real distinction” in the immediate data of consciousness, and that one will be able to find direct conscious parallels of each and every term and relation of metaphysics originates from this basic tendency to confuse data with facts. Byrne seems to diagnose the same problem in the earlier writings of Doran. According to Byrne, Doran’s phrase, ‘experience ourselves as loved unconditionally and invited to love in return’ is not a description of what is given in consciousness but is “derivable, modeled on the way Lonergan derives Heiler’s characteristics of world religions.”\textsuperscript{159} In “Revisiting ‘Consciousness and Grace,’” Doran reformulates his position in light of this critique.

Commenting on religious consciousness, Doran says,

\begin{quote}
This inchoate and abiding rest from intentional striving, a secure base that sustains and carries us in our intentional operations, can be further objectified, with the help of the revelation manifest in Christ Jesus, as being loved in an unqualified fashion, and being invited and empowered to love in return.\textsuperscript{160}
\end{quote}

While Doran’s reformulation recognizes that ‘being loved’ and ‘being invited to love in return’ are objectifications that require a superstructure of religious language, he still seems to contend that there is a real distinction, within religious experience, between the conscious correlates of ‘being loved’ and ‘being invited to love in return.’

There are two ways one can understand the idea of an experience being “further objectified, with the help of the revelation manifest in Christ Jesus.” It could refer to the activity of describing the contents of an insight that results from raising questions about religious experience in Christian terms; it could also refer to the act of describing, with


the help of Christian terminology, the distinct elements that are noticed *within experience*. In “Revisiting ‘Consciousness and Grace,’” Doran distinguishes the first type of preliminary presence from a subsequent objectification that requires a language, but he does not distinguish between the kind of objectification of experience that refers to a description of distinctions that are noticed *within experience* and the kind of objectification of experience that refers to a description of the *contents of insights and judgments*. Consequently, Doran, at least in his earlier career, thought that what he described was grace as experienced when what he actually described was the content of a direct and a reflective insight regarding an experience of grace, which would be grace known under the formality of the definable and the real. It seems to me that the early Doran has failed to sufficiently distinguish religious experience as experience from religious experience as intelligently grasped and rationally affirmed. As such, these writings foster a tendency to confuse data with facts and, on that basis, to read into *experience* the distinctions of the kind of *ontological* consideration of grace that is proper to a theoretical theology.

Self-attention requires a kind of *epoche* that resists the temptation to engage the phenomena in a reified way. But the systematic theologian lives in the world of theory and develops the kinds of intellectual habits that enable him to draw distinctions, raise critical questions, and work out conceptual solutions; given this habituation, he has difficulty staying with the given when he attends to his own experience; and, consequently, he becomes prone to a kind of tacit conceptualism that reads into the data of consciousness the distinctions of a pseudo-theoretical theology. But there are reasons, other than sheer habit, that motivate the tendency to confuse data with facts. For some,
the confusion of data with facts is unintentional, for others, it is, more or less, a deliberate and strategic decision

Immanuel Kant, once awakened from his “dogmatic slumber” by the alarm clock of David Hume’s version of empiricism, realized that experience could not, of itself, secure a basis for knowledge. If the external world is a flood of impressions, how is knowing possible? What are the conditions for the possibility of knowing? If nothing in the external world is universal, permanent, and necessary, what grounds truth claims? How does one move from a world of fleeting impressions to knowledge of reality? How does one move from data to facts? For Kant, there is no movement from data to facts—no derivation of facts from data. What one experiences is data always already structured by a priori concepts. For Kant, facts are given. The idea of data as an unstructured chaos of impressions that bombard and inundate the senses is a limit notion. Impressions are given as structured. In Lonergan’s language, impressions are given and may be intelligently understood and rationally affirmed. Since, for Kant, facts are given in the sense of intuition, and there is no movement, by direct and reflective insight, from data to facts, Kant effectively solves the epistemological difficulty by disqualifying the problem. The theologians operating in the fifth functional specialty face a permutation of the Kantian dilemma. Instead of the problem of asking the questions that entails a set of criteria or conditions to be fulfilled by the proper movement from data to facts, the theologian’s issue is to begin with revealed truths about grace, analogously understood in metaphysical terms, and to discover their intelligibility with their corresponding terms and relations in the data of consciousness. The question for these theologians is not ‘how can I correctly understand the data of graced consciousness within a flood of chaotic and
unstructured impressions?’ but ‘how can I know what in the unstructured data of consciousness corresponds to the dogmatic truths already understood and expressed in terms of metaphysical analogies?’ If there is no one-to-one correspondence between conscious terms in the data of experience and the analogous understanding of the truths of faith expressed in metaphysical terms and relations, then how can one transpose these metaphysical analogies into analogies drawn from the context of interiority? What provides the control of meaning? If there is an incommensurability between the metaphysically grounded analogies of what is known by belief and the analogies based on the internal experience of grace, so that there is no neat and tidy point-for-point correspondence, then what is the heuristic value of the medieval formulations for discovering the conscious elements in the domain of experience?

Kant confuses data and facts because he does not grasp how questions for understanding and reflection contain their own criteria that guide the intelligent and reasonable apprehension of the data of an unstructured flood of impressions to correct psychological analogies. In a similar manner, the theologian who overlooks the role played by questions in theological inquiry, will bypass the issue and avoid the painstaking work of identifying and naming the conscious equivalents of metaphysical analogies. These theologians seem to think that what is given in consciousness is not unstructured and preliminary but a set of terms and relations so structured and worked up as to match in a univocal manner the terms and relations of classical theoretical theology expressed in metaphysical terms and relations. Supposing that there is a one-to-one correspondence between the terms and relations of such a theoretical theology and elements of intentional and non-intentional consciousness, rather than initiating a genuine
inquiry, the theologian already seems to know exactly what is sought—conscious data that indicates the same proportions, distinctions, and relations of the metaphysical analogy. For these theologians the transposition from metaphysical analogies to their conscious equivalents is no real problem.

I believe that Kantian conceptualism, naïve realism, Platonic idealism, and the expectation of a point-for-point correspondence between the realms of theory and interiority all make a similar mistake regarding the *Meno* problem of how you know when you found the answer if you did not already know what you were looking for. They all suppose that one already knows what he is looking for, so that one does not have to actually search for answers. For Plato, understood too literally, one can recognize the answer—one can know—because knowing is, in fact, a re-cognition. In spite of Hume’s empiricist influence, Immanuel Kant remains indelibly marked by his Idealist heritage in the degree that his *a priori* concepts function like Plato’s recollected Ideas. For Kant, one can know phenomenal reality because one already possesses the concepts that impart intelligibility to it. A naïve realist like Etienne Gilson believes one can know because the real is given to the senses, so that judgments of fact are re-affirmations of what is already known implicitly in experience. Theologians who advocates a point-for-point correspondence think one can recognize the corresponding elements in consciousness because he already knows, based on his grasp of scholastic theology, precisely what he is looking for. All of these overlook the role of questions in transforming metaphysical analogies into third stage of meaning analogies grounded in conscious experience. But metaphysical analogies and psychological analogies reside within different fields of

---

161 Kant’s idealism results from the influence of Leibniz through the mediation of Wolff. Insofar as this tradition bears a likeness to its most ancient predecessors, Kant’s philosophy can be located within an intellectual trajectory that begins with Pythagoras and Plato.
meaning; and so the role of questioning in making the transition from one kind of analogy to the other is not to be ignored and disqualified by obscuring the distinction between them. They have not met the challenges head on. They failed to be, in Lonergan’s words, “strong enough to refuse half-measures and insist on complete solutions even though it has to wait.”

Despite the tendency fostered by Doran’s earlier writings to look for a point-for-point correspondence (which his later writings no longer claim), Doran has made remarkable contributions to the project by articulating the starting point for the conversation and clarifying the questions, as objections arose, changing and developing his own questions and modifying his positions. This kind of humility and commitment to truth is characteristic of intellectual conversion.

**Criterion Three: The Application of Special Theoretical Categories**

In his article, “Consciousness: Levels, Sublations, and the Subject as Subject,” Patrick Byrne operates in the fifth functional specialty in formulating a possibly relevant transposition of the distinction between sanctifying grace and the habit of charity. His analysis of levels of consciousness dismantles the kind of picture thinking model encouraged naïve realism.

In terms derived from conscious experience, Byrne claims that sanctifying grace corresponds to the self-present-to-self as unrestrictedly in love *as such*, while the habit of charity corresponds to the self-present-to-self as unrestrictedly in love *as the patterning continuity for a series of acts of charity*. But don’t these correctly distinguished modes of self-presentation he identifies in consciousness also correspond to the distinction between habitual grace as operative and habitual grace as cooperative? Habitual grace not only...
transforms the soul supernaturally but cooperates when the person performs acts of charity. The habit of charity and habitual grace as cooperative are both, in the enactment of acts of charity. Still, this description, in terms of interiorly differentiated consciousness, of self-present-to-self as unrestrictedly in love as the *patterning continuity for a series of acts* could with equal legitimacy refer to what the second stage of meaning’s theoretical theology called habitual grace as cooperative. Byrne takes the project of transposition in the right direction by refusing to settle for a simplistic one-to-one correspondence because he realizes that the “real distinction” between sanctifying grace and the habit of charity cannot be found as such in the data of consciousness, because talk of a “real distinction,” which is appropriate within a metaphysical context, may not be appropriate in an experiential context. What is meant by the phrase ‘real distinction’ is related in a more complicated way to the undifferentiated unity of conscious data as *data*.

A theoretical theology distinguishes the habit of charity from habitual grace as cooperative in relation to the difference between remote and proximate causality: habitual grace as cooperative is the remote cause of acts of charity, while the habit of charity is the proximate cause of acts of charity. In order to properly transpose the distinction between sanctifying grace and the habit of charity, one would need to be able to distinguish in consciousness self-present-to-self as unrestrictedly in love as the *remote* patterning continuity for a series of acts from self-present-to-self as unrestrictedly in love as the *proximate* patterning continuity for a series of acts. Byrne has not succeeded in transposing the habit of charity not because what he identifies is not a fair description of an element in consciousness but because what he describes could apply to either the
proximate or the remote cause in a second stage theoretical theology. According to the third criterion, *one will expect a successful transposition to the extent that one correctly understands the scholastic special and general categories in themselves and in their correlation to consciousness.*

Wilkins reflects on the meaning of grace and the habit of charity in a methodical theology. Unlike the others, Wilkins does not make an attempt to identify the conscious correlates of theoretical terms and relations; instead, he attempts to derive an analogy for sanctifying grace and the habit of charity by using the categories of critical metaphysics. First, it is important to emphasize at least two of the strengths even though there are many more. I point out, to begin with, Wilkins recognition that the discussion on sanctifying grace and charity is still an abstraction unless it is understood within the concrete context of the experience of conversion, whereas the previous discussion treats sanctifying grace and charity outside the concrete and dialectical context of sin and grace. Wilkins realizes that grace is not simply about the self-communication of God to some kind of pure nature but about the self-communication of God to the sinner existing in personal relationships with other human beings. In an effort to consider grace more concretely, Wilkins considers the dialectic of sin and grace and the inter-subjective relations of community. Lonergan also indicated the need to consider the human reality, “not in the abstract, not as he would be in some state of pure nature, but as in fact he is here and now in all the concreteness of his living and dying.”162 Again, Wilkins’ formulation of grace in the categories of a critical metaphysics is extremely helpful. It does not transpose ‘being in love’ in terms of consciousness, yet thinking about ‘being in love’ in terms of operators and integrators develops Lonergan’s idea of grace as a

---

development of the subject. Wilkins’ appreciation of the distinction between the realms of theory and interiority as fields of meaning becomes evident in his rejection of a point-for-point correspondence between the terms and relations of scholastic theology and those verified in consciousness.

To settle whether or not there is an element in consciousness that corresponds to the habit of charity or there exist certain data that would warrant an inference to a special methodical category that corresponds to the habit of charity is beyond the scope of the current chapter, which is written from a methodological and dialectical viewpoint. While I am not operating in the functional specialty ‘foundations,’ I am inclined to agree with Charles Hefling that “the distinction between “sanctifying grace” and “habitual charity” is not a distinction that a methodologically grounded theology has any reason to affirm.”

Another important participant in the conversation, Michael Vertin, speaks of the infusion of grace as transforming intentionality, and its effects upon intentionality provide conscious data on grace. The religious datum is a transformed intentional structure. In his own words, “divine love elevates intentionality” by enabling ordinary operations to “manifest the holy…by virtue of the agapic datum…the transcendental notions of goodness, reality, intelligibility, become notions of holiness.” Vertin’s idea that grace sublates the other operations offers a beginning for a serious transposition of gratia elevans. Vertin concedes, besides the fact that the gift transforms intentionality, a prior non-intentional experience of the gift. The fact that Vertin speaks of this prior non-

---

intentional experience as a gift is significant. It raises a very important question: can we, in fact, experience grace as grace?

As far as the shortcomings of Vertin’s approach are concerned, Vertin describes the experience as “the awareness-content of an act that is wholly non-intentional, purely conscious, an act whose content is totally identical with the act itself.”165 But what does it mean to talk about a non-intentional act? Is it an act or a dynamic state? Is the dynamic state intentional or non-intentional? Vertin’s language here seems to confuse rather than clarify the issue. According to the third criterion: *one will expect a successful transposition to the extent that one correctly understands the scholastic special and general categories in themselves and in their application to consciousness.*

While Vertin argues that the agapic datum is experienced prior to and distinct from an experience of the particular acts that it enacts, Dunne brings to light the example of Paul who “first experienced loving God and neighbor and only subsequently realized that this experience is, and always was, identical to being loved by God.”166 By “subsequently realized” Dunne means that the assertion of being loved by God is not a description of an interior experience but inferred from a set of data made present by particular acts of charity. For Dunne, being loved by God is only an experience, an experience mediated by an act of judgment. Dunne is, I think, trying to respect Lonergan’s idea that one needs to attend to the subject as he concretely is, in his everyday experience. But in his analysis Dunne neglects the subject as subject as the domain of interiority in which to discover the conscious correlates of sanctifying grace. (the fourth criterion) Furthermore, while Dunne regards acts as prior in the order of discovery, he

165 Ibid. 31
never mentions the fact that acts make a subject present to himself. He does not describe the self made present by means of the acts of *loving God and neighbor*. As such, one does not adhere to the *fifth criterion*.

All of these theologians, except maybe Wilkins, do not offer an account of grace that reflects a complete turn from an abstract a concrete perspective. As such, they do not describe religious experience in terms of conversion and development. Insofar as one fails to advert to the data on conversion and development, he will think about grace in the abstract and will fail to satisfy the sixth criterion. He will ignore the fact that an identification and description of grace in consciousness will bring to light the subject not as an abstraction but as he concretely is.

In this chapter, I have engaged not the foundational task of transposing Lonergan’s concept of ‘grace,’ but in the methodological task of developing a heuristic for transposing what Lonergan means by ‘grace.’ I have used the heuristic to point out both the shortcomings and insights of certain essays. In the next chapter, I will use this heuristic and in particular the insights and directions of thought opened up by the writings of Patrick Byrne, Jeremy Wilkins, and Michael Vertin to perform the more foundational task of identifying the conscious correlates of a theoretical theology of grace.
Chapter III
Constructing a Rahner-Lonergan Dialogue

In *Method in Theology*, Lonergan, aware of the need to communicate religious conversion in a language that resonates with human experience, uses the phrase ‘being-in-love without restrictions’ to express what the scholastics meant by the term ‘sanctifying grace.’ In a later work called “Philosophy and the Religious Phenomenon,” Lonergan makes the provocative claim that what he means by ‘being-in-love unrestrictedly’ corresponds to what Rahner means by ‘supernatural existential.’ While I agree that there is some similarity between Lonergan’s term ‘being-in-love without restrictions’ and Rahner’s ‘supernatural existential,’ the comparison is difficult and far from obvious. The comparison is not overwhelmingly clear because ‘being-in-love unrestrictedly’ and ‘supernatural existential’ are multivalent terms; in addition, the conversation among Lonergan scholars that attempted to clarify Lonergan’s meaning tends to express ‘being-in-love unrestrictedly’ in a language that makes the comparison with Rahner’s ‘supernatural existential’ even less obvious.

167 Constructing a dialogue between Rahner and Lonergan involves overcoming both existential and conceptual barriers. Though Rahner and Lonergan share the same basic horizon, they use different terms to communicate their insights. In order to compare the ideas of these thinkers and not simply their words, one needs to be able to move beyond their language and apprehend their intended meaning. But this requires that one become detached from a particular description of grace and open oneself to a multiplicity of expressions. This is especially challenging if one is committed to a particular author and has appropriated his language. In the case of a student of Lonergan, it would require that he detach from his own language and approach Rahner’s set of categories with a hermeneutic of trust; it would require that a student of Rahner search out data in her own experience that would correspond to Lonergan’s language. It requires that one approach the other with the intention of finding similarities and points of convergence. In Lonergan’s words, “There is needed in the theologian the spiritual development that will enable him both to enter into the experience of others and to frame the terms and relations that will express that experience.” (Method 290) Being open to other expressions and detaching from one’s own familiar language means overcoming a kind of group bias and removing an existential barrier that would prevent an authentic dialogue.


Chapter three will compare ‘being-in-love unrestrictedly’ and the ‘supernatural existential’ in an attempt to clarify points of convergence and divergence between their respective meanings.

A. Stages of Grace

For Rahner, the self-communication of God, which is the primary meaning of grace, creates a disposition and openness in the creature to receive that communication. In Rahner’s estimation, this disposition is not an ‘accidental modification’ of the creature’s being, but rather a defining and constitutive feature. According to Rahner, the person, in the core of her being, is the event of a divine self-communication. In other words, the person can be defined as the space or openness in which the divine most fully communicates itself outside the context of eternity. Furthermore, the disposition to receive divinity does not passively await but actively seeks out and searches for its beloved. For Rahner the disposition created by the divine self-communication is a dynamic and active openness that reaches out into the infinite expanse of being. Through this movement of the spirit one is drawn into an absolute and holy mystery that is always already offering and donating itself. The mode of transcendence in which the creature

---

170 The term ‘accidental’ can be ambiguous. Accidental can in some contexts be employed to express the fact that a quality is not central to what the being is. For example, ‘height’ is an accident that is not central to what it means to be human. Rahner wanted to avoid language that expressed this supernatural orientation as something incidental to the creature’s being. But there are other accidents that cannot be separated from the core of the human reality. For instance, the intellect and the will are accidental potencies (proper accidents). They are accidental because they do not exist on their own but must inhere in a substance.


encounters the sacred mystery that calls and invites and offers itself not as distant term but as present and close is what Rahner means by the term ‘supernatural existential.’

The supernatural existential is both omnipresent and universal. It is a permanent existential of the human spirit. According to Rahner, God created human beings for the purpose of an absolute divine self-communication that culminates in the event of the beatific vision. For Rahner, this follows from a consideration of God’s eternity. Since the reality of God is timeless, there are no divine afterthoughts. In other words, God did not create creatures with a purely natural end and, as an afterthought, decide to respond to sin by sending his Son and Spirit to open up the creature to the supernatural end of ultimate union with Himself. The thoughts of God do not belong to a temporal sequence. For Rahner, God created with the intent of communicating Himself to creatures as an offer and invitation to a final and definitive union in the beatific vision. Therefore, the openness of the human spirit to the infinite mystery of God is not some kind of addition to the spirit; rather, since the end for which the spirit was created is the absolute communication of divinity, this disposition of the spirit, by which it encounters the sacred mystery as an unthematic yet ever-abiding offer and invitation, constitutes the very reality of the human spirit. The supernatural existential is constitutive of finite spirit. For Rahner, the human spirit encounters the absolute mystery as offer and invitation every time one asks questions, understands, deliberates, or exercises one’s freedom. In other words, the human person experiences the mystery of God as offer (which is what Rahner

---

173 According to Rahner, “The antecedent self-communication of God which is prior to man’s freedom means nothing else but that the spirit’s transcendental movement in knowledge and love towards the absolute mystery is borne by God himself in his self-communication in such a way that this movement has its term and its source not in the holy mystery as eternally distant and as a goal which can only be reached asymptotically, but rather in the God of absolute closeness and immediacy.” For an extended discussion, see *Foundations* 126-133.

means by grace) in her everyday existence. In every human activity, insofar as it is human, the person experiences grace. The sacred is always already inter-penetrating the profane. For Rahner, religious experience is not reserved for the saints or even for discrete and fleeting moments of holiness; it is a perduing and inextricable component of mundane existence. It is experienced always. Furthermore, this mode of transcendence by which a person experiences grace (the mystery of God as offer) is a constitutive element of the human spirit. It is experienced not only always, but by all individuals. Therefore, the experience of grace, for Rahner, is both omnipresent and universal.176

For Rahner, the supernatural existential is the condition for the possibility of receiving grace. In the openness of human transcendence, the mystery of God becomes present as an offer that both conditions and demands a free response. While the offer of God is an existential of the human being, Rahner speaks about the free response to the offer as an existentielle. While the existential is a structure of the creature that inheres prior to and as the basis for decisions, the existentielle is a response that emerges in the sphere of human freedom. In the decision to accept and further open oneself up to the self-communication of the absolute mystery of God, the creature becomes further perfected. If the creature decides to accept God’s offer of self-communication, she becomes ‘justified.’ If her decisions about beings in the world reflects a self-transcending and relentless commitment to the good and the true—if through her words and deeds, she surrenders herself to the silent, unobtrusive, but ever-present call of the absolute mystery, she will have freely cooperated with the divine will to bring herself

---

177 See Rahner, Foundations 128-129.
into ‘right relationship with God.’ For Rahner, God’s gratuitous act of self-communication is the condition for the possibility of justification.\textsuperscript{178} The perfection that results through justification opens one up to the final perfection of the beatific vision—which enables the creature to receive God absolutely.\textsuperscript{179} In this final phase, the creature appropriates the self-communication of God to such an absolute degree that the creature becomes assimilated into divinity in a way that exceeds what occurs already in the gift of charity. In the ultimate mode of self-communication, the creature becomes divinized by entering into a complete and definitive infinite union with God.

For Rahner, the creature appropriates the divine self-communication in stages. In the first phase, the creature experiences the self-communication of God as an invitation and call to which he is always already responding. In a second stage theoretical theology, it would correspond to sanctifying grace as operative. The second phase is the free acceptance of God’s offer. In a second stage theoretical theology, this would correspond to sanctifying grace as both operative and cooperative (not just cooperative but always both operative and cooperative). The third phase is the beatific vision. This is the grace of glory.

Lonergan, in a fashion similar to Rahner, speaks about sanctifying grace as the beginning of a supernatural life that unfolds in successive stages. For Lonergan, \textit{gratia gratum faciens, caritas, lumen gloriae}, and the \textit{esse secondarium} are created terms by which humans participate in the uncreated relations that are identical with the divine essence. Sanctifying grace and charity are the created terms by which humans participate

\textsuperscript{178} For Rahner, even if the creature has a history of decisions in her life that orient her in one direction—even if she becomes habituated, she is not bound by necessity; there is always a \textit{fundamental option} for God since in freedom one takes possession of oneself and decides about oneself as a whole and God is always offering God’s self to that freedom.

\textsuperscript{179} See Rahner, \textit{Foundations} 117-118.
in active and passive spiration (Father and Son to Holy Spirit and Holy Spirit to Father and Son) respectively, while the light of glory is the created participation in the relation of the Son to the Father.\textsuperscript{180} The order to the relations in God corresponds to an order of the created participations in humans; and since the subjects who are modified by these absolutely supernatural realities are historical, the order is not only ontological (as in God) but also temporal. Sanctifying grace, by which God entitatively changes the human substance and elevates it to the supernatural order, begins a life that has its finality in the light of glory. In relation to the light of glory, which signifies the completion and perfection of supernatural life, habitual grace, which sanctifies the person, is understood by both Lonergan and Rahner as the commencement of the blessed life—as \textit{inchoatio formalis}.

\textbf{B. Created and Uncreated Grace}

Robert Doran expresses the issue as follows: “are we different because God dwells in us, or does God dwell in us because we have been made different?”\textsuperscript{181} Rahner favors the first formulation and criticizes the scholastic idea that ‘uncreated grace’ (God’s gift of Himself) is a function of created grace.\textsuperscript{182} Rahner challenges the scholastic position for three reasons. First, the Scriptural data suggest that a priority be accorded to uncreated grace. Rahner claims that for St. Paul, “man’s inner sanctification is first and foremost a communication of the personal Spirit of God, that is to say, in scholastic terms, a \textit{donum increatum}; and he sees every created grace…as a consequence and a

\textsuperscript{180} See Bernard Lonergan \textit{On the Triune God: Systematics} (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2007) 473.
\textsuperscript{181} Robert Doran, “Consciousness and Grace,” \textit{Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies} 11 (Boston College: Lonergan Institute, 1993) 64.
manifestation of the possession of this uncreated grace.”

Secondly, he finds the patristic sources in agreement with the Scriptures. Thirdly, there are soteriological reasons for Rahner’s rejection of the scholastic opinion. If medieval theology conceives the *lumen gloriae* as the absolute and complete self-communication of God to the human intellect in an unmediated vision, where the divine reality itself (as formal cause) replaces the impressed species, then according to the scholastic theology of the beatific vision, the created grace that is the light of glory is dependent on a divine self-communication. Understanding created grace prior to the vision (what later scholastics called habitual or actual grace) as “a commencement of the blessed life, homogenous with the ontological presuppositions of the vision” means that human entry into supernatural life is a result of a divine self-communication. In Rahner’s opinion, a theology that sees created grace (material cause) as a function of the divine self-communication (formal cause) is able to conceive personal relationship with God as foundational and central to salvation. According to Rahner, the scholastic model, on the contrary, prioritizes created grace and makes the self-communication of God conditional. From this perspective, created grace

183 Ibid. 322
184 See Rahner, “Some Implications of the Scholastic Concept of Uncreated Grace,” *Theological Investigations* 1 (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1961) 328. One may argue that an actuation of matter implies an efficient cause. For Rahner, the efficient cause is creation, by which God brings about a supernatural exisetential as material cause that never exists outside of God’s self-communication as formal cause. Rahner argues against understanding the gift of grace primarily in terms of efficient causality. He writes, “for all the strictly supernatural realities with which we are acquainted (the hypostatic union, the *visio beatifica* and—as we shall go on to show here—the supernatural bestowal of grace) have this in common, that in them there is expressed a relationship of God to a creature which is not one of efficient causality…and which must consequently fall under the head of formal causality…” (Rahner, “Some Implications” 329).
185 Ibid. 326.
186 Rahner uses formal causality as the analogy to explain the relationship between created and uncreated grace. He writes, “Now according to St. Thomas it is the case with a *dispositio ultima (dispositio quae est necessitas ad formam)* that on the one hand *as causa materialis* it logically precedes the *forma*, and yet on the other that it depends for its subsistence upon the formal causality of the *forma*, so that to affirm its presence is simultaneously to affirm with inner necessity the presence of the formal causality of the *forma* and conversely.” (Rahner, “Some Implications of the Scholastic Concept of Uncreated Grace,” *Theological Investigations* 1 (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1961) 333).
(sanctification) does not result from a divine self-communication to the depths of the human spirit but from a divine decision that effects an accidental modification of the creature’s being. For Rahner, if entry into supernatural life results not from a divine self-communication that informs created grace but from an accidental change effected by a decision originating in a God who remains remote from the creature, then one can misconstrue the relationship between the life of grace and glory, the result of which will be an oversight of a personalist soteriology (inter-personal union and mutual indwelling of human and divine persons). In his own words,

The life of grace, that is to say, and the life of future glory do not stand in a purely moral and juridical relation to each other, such that the latter is the reward for the former as merit; the life of glory is the definitive flowering (the ‘manifestation,’ the ‘disclosure’) of the life of divine sonship already possessed and merely ‘hidden’ for the moment. Hence grace, as the ontological basis of this supernatural life, is also an inner entitative principle (at least a partial principle of the vision of God).

If created grace does not originate from a divine self-communication, then according to Rahner, salvation becomes based primarily on a juridical decree and not on a personal and ontological union with God.

In *The Triune God: Systematics*, Lonergan’s position regarding created and uncreated grace harmonizes with the position of Karl Rahner. Under assertion seventeen, Lonergan argues,

---

187 Ibid. 326.
188 In grace is it the divine being or the distinct persons that is communicated? In other words, does the recipient of grace have a non-appropriated relation to the divine persons? For Rahner, since theology cannot prove the matter either way, a preference is given to the Scriptures. Rahner explains, “there can be absolutely no objection to maintaining on the basis of the positive data of Revelation that the attribution of determinate relations of the recipient of grace to the three divine Persons is not merely a matter of appropriation, but is intended to give expression to a proper relationship in each case.” (Rahner, “Some Implications” 345).
189 In a comparison of Rahner and Lonergan, Robert Doran comments on the evolution of Lonergan’s position: “Students’ notes in the archives of the Lonergan Research Institute give quite detailed information
For just as God knows that contingent things exist through his own knowledge, and not through an external term, which is nevertheless required, and just as God wills that contingent things exist through his own volition, and not through an external term, which is nevertheless required, so also the [incarnate Son] is all that he is through his own proper divine act of existence and not through an external term, which is nevertheless absolutely required, and the Holy Spirit is sent through that which the Holy Spirit is and not through an external term, which is nevertheless absolutely required.  

For Lonergan, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is accomplished by God alone and is not conditioned by but rather effects the external term of sanctifying or created grace. Sanctifying grace is not a condition for God to dwell within the human heart but, for Lonergan, a consequent condition of indwelling and required for the truth that God indwells. Both Lonergan and Rahner argue for a priority of uncreated grace. Both agree that the self-communication of God is the prior ground of a created grace that Lonergan calls a ‘consequent condition’ and Rahner refers to as a ‘created disposition’.  

Lonergan’s term ‘consequent condition’ emerges in his discussion of contingent predication. Lonergan’s theory of contingent predication solves the problem of predicing contingent truths of an absolutely necessary agent. It is an answer to a question that arises when theological truths are considered in the context of a philosophy of God. Lonergan writes,

---

on Lonergan’s 1947-1948 course in Toronto, *De Gratia*. In this course Lonergan proposed three propositions relevant to our present question, and the third of these went through at least two versions. The first version comes close to what Rahner criticized in the scholastics, but the second not only corrects this articulation but also proposes another way than formal causality for understanding how the God of grace is a constitutive principle of the person to whom God’s love is offered and by whom the gift is accepted.” (Doran, “Consciousness and Grace,” *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 11 (1993) 70).


191 Robert Doran writes, “Thus, what Lonergan came to account for through a consequent condition, Rahner accounts for through a created disposition, but with at least the difference that the latter is a material disposition for the reception of a formal (or quasi-formal) cause, whereas the former has to do with the truth of a relation established in the person, one term of which is the uncreated gift of God; the relation is established consequent upon the gift, and so by reason of the divine initiative alone, but it is also the condition of the possibility of our having the truth that God dwells in us.” (Doran, “Consciousness and Grace,” *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 11 (1993) 73).
Whatever is contingently true cannot have the correspondence of truth through a reality that is simple and necessary and this alone. But the fact that a divine person sends or is sent is contingently true; for all that can be or not be exists by a sovereignly free divine decision; and absolutely speaking, creation, incarnation, and sanctification could have not been. Therefore, the fact that a divine person sends or is sent cannot have the correspondence of truth through the divine perfection alone, and therefore requires an appropriate external term.\(^{192}\)

Truth requires a corresponding reality to which the true judgment refers. But since God is absolutely necessary, contingent truths predicated about God cannot correspond to anything contingent in God, and so require some contingent created terms. With his discussion of God as a quasi-formal cause, Rahner also attempts to safeguard the doctrine that there is no contingency in God. Rahner remarks,

\[\ldots\text{it cannot be impossible in principle to allow an active formal causality (}\text{eine formale Wirkursachlichkeit})\text{ of God upon a creature without thereby implying that this reactively impresses a new determination upon God’s Being in itself, one which would do away with his absolute transcendence and immutability. One may explicitly draw attention to this meta-categorical character of God’s abidingly transcendent formal causality by a prefixed ‘quasi…'}^{193}\]

Consequent condition is a term that answers questions about the proper way to meaningfully predicate contingent truths of the divine reality. Inquiries about the metaphysical status of the consequent condition in relation to human nature or the reality of God are further questions whose answers lie within the scope of a theological anthropology.

\textbf{C. Grace and Nature}

\(^{192}\) Lonergan, \textit{The Triune God: Systematics} 467. See also Lonergan, \textit{The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ} (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2002) 97.

In an article entitled “Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace,” Rahner proposes a solution to the problem of nature and grace that attempts to avoid both the extrinsicist propensities of late Scholasticism and what he considers to be the flawed solution of la nouvelle theologie. Extrinsicist tendencies in late scholastic thought were primarily due to conceptualist assumptions that confuse distinctions in thought with separations in reality; given this assumption, grace was understood to occupy a sphere of existence separate from nature. Rahner verbalizes the common objection to such an extrisicist conception:

if man so far as he experiences himself existentially by himself, is really nothing but pure nature, he is always in danger of understanding himself merely as a nature and behaving accordingly. And then he will find God’s call to him out of this human plane merely a disturbance, which is trying to force something upon him (however elevated this may be in itself) for which he is not made…”

Both Rahner and la nouvelle theologie reject the two-story house model of nature and grace. But if grace does not occupy a separate plane of existence, how does one conceive the relationship between grace and nature? La nouvelle theologie attempted to solve the problem by pointing out a desire (obediential potency) for grace in human nature as the link between nature and grace. On this view, grace would not be understood as a disturbance of human nature but rather as its proper fulfillment. For Rahner, if there is a natural desire (disposition) for the supernatural (grace), such that human nature is unfulfilled and meaningless without grace, then God, by virtue of his own wisdom and goodness, must grant the creature grace. According to Rahner’s analysis, if “God’s wisdom owes itself the fulfillment of this disposition, because and insofar as it has

---

created this disposition in such a way that the disposition exacts the fulfillment,“195 then
grace would no longer be grace; it would cease to be a gift above and beyond the gift of
nature. The classic beggar analogy adduced as a counter-argument fails precisely
because, for Rahner, “the beggar does not have a disposition to be fed by just this
determinate particular host, and the host has not got to take upon himself a responsibility
for the beggar’s hunger: thus what we have here is a gift bestowed in pure generosity.”196
In this case, a natural disposition for food does not exclude the possibility of food given
as both fulfillment and gift. But since God created the disposition whose fulfillment lies
in the offering of Himself, the only way for the self-communication of God to be
considered gift (grace) is if the disposition for God is not natural but itself a gift
(something supernatural).197

But while Rahner challenges the identification of the disposition for grace (God)
with what is natural (la nouvelle theologie), he still had to think about grace in a way that
avoided the extrinsic conception of Baroque scholasticism. Rahner’s precise question
that developed out of his dialectical encounters with la nouvelle theologie and the
scholastic conceptualists was this: how can grace be both gift and a constitutive element
in the human spirit? How can grace be a constitutive gift? The disposition for grace
needed to be constitutive of the human spirit to avoid the extrinsic conception of grace
and to ensure that the bestowal of grace really and truly fulfilled the human spirit; but it

195 Ibid. 307.
196 Ibid. 307.
197 For example, suppose a parent were to instill a desire in her child for a toy. The desire for the toy is not
‘natural’ in the sense of innate. If the parent were to deny the child the toy after instilling the desire, the
parent may be considered cruel. To be a good parent means to fulfill the desire. Even though the parent is
obligated to fulfill the desire, it does not mean that the given toy would not be a gift. It is still a gift
because the desire itself is a gift. Food is not the same. For a parent to give a child food is not a gift but,
strictly speaking, the parent’s moral obligation (something owed)—since the desire for food is natural and
its fulfillment contributes to the child’s well-being.
also had to be conceived as above and beyond nature to preserve the gift aspect of grace. How can the disposition for grace (God) be both a gift and a constitutive component of the human person? The supernatural existential was Rahner’s answer to this question.

Rahner disagrees with the scholastic idea that the “concretely experienced (contingently factual) quiddity of man squarely coincides with man’s nature as the concept opposed by theology to the supernatural.” For Rahner, the human quiddity—‘what it means to be’ human—is a combination of nature and the supernatural existential. So the supernatural existential, as a disposition for God (which functions as material cause in relation to God) is part of the human quiddity; it is part of the definition of ‘human.’ Human ‘nature,’ is what Rahner refers to as a ‘remainder concept.’ Although one is not able to clearly distinguish and specify what it is, human ‘nature’ is what is left over in the human when one subtracts the supernatural existential. For Rahner, since the supernatural existential, as the dynamic disposition and openness for God is beyond nature, it is supernatural gift; but since it is part of the ‘concrete quiddity’ of the human person, it is a constitutive feature of human existence. The supernatural existential fulfills the conditions of a solution to the contemporary problem of grace.

199 Rahner says, “… this ‘potency’ [supernatural existential] is what is inmost and most authentic in him, the centre and root of what he is absolutely. (Rahner, “Concerning the Relationship Between Nature and Grace” 311).
200 Rahner writes, “Thus the man who receives this Love (in the Holy Spirit and thanks to the Word of the Gospel) will know this very existential for this Love as not owed to him, unexacted by him the real man. This knowledge is what allows him to distinguish and delimit what he always is (his concrete, indissoluble ‘quiddity’) into what is this unexacted real receptivity, the supernatural existential, and what is left over as remainder when this inmost centre is subtracted from the substance of his concrete quiddity, his ‘nature.’” Rahner, “Concerning the Relationship Between Nature and Grace,” _Theological Investigations_ 1 (London: Dartman, Longman, and Todd, 1961) 313.
201 In _Hearers of the Word_, Rahner talked about a natural openness to God (Rahner, _Hearers of the Word_, New York: Herder and Herder, 1969, 15) and stressed the continuity between nature and grace. In this document he emphasized the continuity because he was seeking answers to questions about philosophy of religion. In “Concerning the Relationship Between Nature and Grace,” Rahner is dealing with a whole new
Lonergan conceives of nature as open to God and refers to this openness in terms of a natural desire. While Rahner admits the possibility of a natural dynamism toward God (grace), the language in Lonergan seems to be stronger and perhaps more in line with the Rahner of Hörer des Wortes. Lonergan’s writings suggest a compatibility between the idea of grace as gift and the idea of grace as fulfillment of a natural desire. For Lonergan, the fact that the natural desire must be fulfilled by a supernatural gift does mean that grace is then somehow owed.

Lonergan, more so than Rahner, articulates the relationship between nature and grace in a way that conforms to the position of Thomas Aquinas. For Lonergan, there is not a real distinction between ‘human quiddity’ and ‘human nature.’ Lonergan agrees with Rahner that grace is constitutive of personal existence but, unlike Rahner, conceives the supernatural order to be beyond human nature and thus, beyond the human quiddity. For Lonergan, the supernatural is absolutely disproportionate to human nature; and since human nature for Lonergan is identical in the actual order with the ‘quiddity’ of the human person, the supernatural order is absolutely disproportionate to the human essence or substance.

set of questions. Since la nouvelle theologie, in Rahner’s mind, negated the gift of grace by stressing the continuity with nature too much, he was searching for a way to distinguish grace from nature. The discontinuity is stressed in his article on nature and grace because Rahner was attempting to solve a different problem. But the two positions are not opposed. Even in his article on nature and grace, Rahner admits a natural openness to Revelation. He claims that the natural openness to God in the creature is more than a non-repugnance. He says that nature is open to God so long as the meaning and significance of nature does not rely on the self-communication of God in grace; he also remarks that nature may have a dynamism toward grace. (See Rahner, “Concerning the Relationship Between Nature and Grace,” Theological Investigations 1 (London: Dartman, Longman, and Todd, 1961) 308-315). In Rahner’s section on Christology in Foundations, his language is even stronger. See Rahner, Foundations 216-217. Lonergan seems to be in basic agreement with this notion of human nature. See Lonergan, “The Natural Desire to See God,” Collection.

Since grace is a gift that transcends the human substance but nevertheless concretely changes the human substance without changing what it means to be human, the infusion of grace is expressed, in Aristotelian language, as a *quality* and an *accidental* modification of the human being. For Lonergan, the fact that grace is expressed as an accident does not imply an extrinsicist conception of grace. The statement that grace is an accident is an answer to a question regarding the relationship with human ‘nature.’ But ‘nature’ is an abstraction. It is a term that defines a mental perspective. Therefore, the language of grace as an accident does not answer questions about the relationship between grace and concrete human existence but simply answers a question about grace in relation to human nature abstractly conceived. Questions about grace in relation to concrete personal existence are further questions. In other words, Lonergan can affirm that grace is both entitatively disproportionate to human nature/essence and that grace is a constitutive element in concrete personal existence.

**D. Grace as Ontological Change**

For Rahner, the gift of grace—the self-communication of God—does not effect, strictly speaking, a change in the human being. Since the disposition to receive the

---


205 This position relies on distinguishing essence and existence. For example, my relationship with my wife is central to who I am, but it is not central to what I am. If suddenly I became a widower, I would not cease to be human. I would not cease to be *what* I am but I may cease to be *who* I am. My relationship with my wife is a constitutive feature of my concrete existence, without being a constitutive feature of my essence. Lonergan’s language of sublation may be able to express the relationship between nature and grace in a way that stresses grace as a constitutive element in the person without departing from the scholastic idea that grace is entitatively disproportionate to the essence. Furthermore, Lonergan thinks about the relationship between God and the sanctified person not in terms of formal but efficient causality. For Lonergan as communicated by the student notes of his 1947-48 *De Gratia* course: “The uncreated gift, as uncreated, is constituted by God alone, and by it God stands to the state of the justified person not only as an efficient principle but also as a constitutive principle; but this constitutive principle is present in the just not as an inherent form but as the term of a relation.”
uncreated grace of God never exists without at least a partial actuation\textsuperscript{206}, and the presence of this uncreated gift (actuation of the supernatural disposition) is a component of the concretely existing human spirit, the human being cannot be defined without grace; and since grace is part of what it means to be human, the self-communication of God must be understood within the context of creation.\textsuperscript{207} For Rahner, there is no change from being without grace to being graced. The creature is always already graced (in this fundamental sense of grace). While one can measure changes in the degree to which a person becomes receptive to the divine self-offering, there is no creature who is absolutely devoid of the divine presence (just as for St. Thomas, no creature exists without conscience).\textsuperscript{208} God is present to each and every creature as the close and intimate abiding term of transcendence—as consolation without a proportionate cause.

For Lonergan, sanctifying grace is the contingent external term that is required to affirm the truth of the mission of the Spirit.\textsuperscript{209} Lonergan writes, “the fact that God freely chooses to create does not involve an entitative change in God but a terminative change outside God.”\textsuperscript{210} By analogy, the fact that God freely chooses to send his Spirit does not involve an entitative change in God but a terminative change in creatures. According to Lonergan, the infusion of grace effects a qualitative change in the creature. As a contingent fact, grace occurs. As an ontological occurrence, it has temporal antecedents

\textsuperscript{206} Rahner says, “Firstly, then, this union, so far as it takes place by way of formal causality, is not simply a consequence of created grace—indeed it precedes the created grace to the extent that this grace, as the ultimate disposition to the union, can only exist when God’s formal causality is actually being exercised.” (Rahner, “Some Implication” 335).

\textsuperscript{207} Even creation, strictly speaking, is not a change but an intelligible relation of dependence. A change requires a perduring substratum. Since creation is ex nihilo, creation does not meet the conditions required for change.

\textsuperscript{208} Since the supernatural existential is always present as an element in the constitution of the human reality, God is always present to the creature as creator and as redeemer.

\textsuperscript{209} For Lonergan, ‘grace’ is twofold: the Incarnation and the pure instance of grace (gratia gratum faciens, donum caritatis, beatific vision).

\textsuperscript{210} Lonergan, The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ 97.
and consequences. By it, the creature is given a new orientation. For Lonergan, religious conversion signifies a real change in the orientation of the creature. In conformity with Aquinas, Lonergan thinks about religious conversion as an absolutely supernatural actual grace that changes the orientation of the creature and habitual grace as the form (habit) that sustains the creature in his new orientation. For Rahner, the supernatural orientation of the creature towards God is not, as it is for Lonergan, a change occurring at some time in the history of the creature.

E. Being-in-Love Unrestrictedly and the Supernatural Existential

Both Rahner and Lonergan express grace in terms of human experience; and their different explanations reflect their different metaphysical conceptions of grace. For both Lonergan and Rahner, grace is described in terms of a dynamic orientation of the spirit; but for Lonergan, conversion is an actual grace that occurs within the history of the creature; by it God changes the orientation of the creature to himself and infuses a habit—a form (habitual grace) that sustains the creature in his new religious orientation. It is this habit that becomes expressed in third stage discourse as ‘being-in-love unrestrictedly.’ Lonergan speaks of being-in-love unrestrictedly not only as a divine invitation but also as a new and more decisive mode of being.211 What in Lonergan corresponds to entry into supernatural life is not for Rahner an event that occurs to a person but rather, is a state (supernatural existential) that is always already an element in the constitution of the person’s concrete quiddity. Consequently, Rahner may be less comfortable than Lonergan using the language of ‘habit’ to express the reality of created

---

211 Lonergan makes a distinction between ‘being-in-love’ and ‘falling in love.’ In some respect, Rahner’s supernatural existential is closer in meaning to what Lonergan refers to as ‘falling in love.’ But for Rahner, falling in love would not be a change—one would always already be falling in love with God.
For Rahner then, one is, in some sense, born into religious conversion. For Lonergan, since grace is understood to be distinct from the human quiddity, its infusion, though not a disturbance to human nature, is expressed, in experiential terms, as a change in orientation. Lonergan describes grace as a qualitative change that happens to a person; it occurs. It is not part of the quiddity of the person—not simply an ever present undertone in consciousness—but rather an event, a change, a transformative actualization of a potency (the human spirit). It is an actualization of vertical finality—a fulfillment of the self-transcending dynamism of the human subject. Consequently, it is described as something more forceful and less subtle than the description in the writings of Karl Rahner.

What is the proper analogy for thinking about created grace? Rahner’s transposition of created grace—the supernatural existential—is understood as a condition for receiving the uncreated grace of God. Since Rahner understands the relationship between uncreated and created grace as analogous to formal causality, matter becomes the natural analogue for thinking about created grace. As a material cause, created grace (what the Scholastics called sanctifying grace) is potency. It is, however, not mere potency but a dynamic openness that reaches out towards God as its term and source. As

---

212 The analogical term ‘habit’ would not however be incompatible with Rahner’s position, in the sense that habit is not natural but infused. In Rahner, the supernatural existential as an orientation to God is not natural. It is simply infused at creation. Unlike habit, the supernatural existential is part of the quiddity of the human; it is part of the ‘natural state’ if by natural one means created.


214 Rahner states, “In this regard created grace is seen as causa materialis (disposition ultima) for the formal causality which God exercises by graciously communicating his own Being to the creature.” (Rahner, “Some Implications” 341). In relation to the donum increatum, created grace is understood as causa materialis; but in relation to human nature/essence, created grace is understood as what Lonergan might call a conjugate form—but a conjugate form that is a structural element in the reality of every human being and one that is continuous with and expands the natural openness of the potentia oboedientialis.
such, it functions as a desire. Because Rahner situates the theology of grace in the context of the beatific vision (in relation to uncreated grace), it is appropriately described in the analogical language of ‘potency’ and ‘desire.’

For Lonergan, the description of created grace (hypostatic union, sanctifying grace, charity, beatific vision) shifts depending on the context in which it is discussed. In relation to the uncreated grace of God (the reception of which culminates in the beatific vision), sanctifying grace within historical existence can be expressed in a set of analogical terms that parallels Rahner’s description. Similar to Rahner’s supernatural existential, Lonergan’s transposition of sanctifying grace—being-in-love unrestrictedly—is a dynamic orientation that opens one to divinity. More specifically, being-in-love is that dynamic state by which the divine persons become present in the human as the known in the knower and as the beloved in the lover.²¹⁵ The later Lonergan remarks, “Experience of grace, then, is as large as the Christian experience of life. It is experience of man’s capacity for self-transcendence, of his unrestricted openness to the intelligible, the true, the good.”²¹⁶ With respect to the attainment of God, both the supernatural existential and being-in-love unrestrictedly can be described (in earthly life) as the commencement of the life of grace; as a supernatural beginning, both terms refer to the person moving towards completion and fulfillment. As such, neither term represents the phase of absolute and total supernatural perfection. When the commencement of the life of grace is considered concretely, one realizes that in order for the initial orientation

²¹⁵ See Lonergan, _The Triune God: Systematics_ 125, 135 n4, 219-229, 621-625, 675-77, 783-85 and 513-521 on “love and the uncreated gift, the habit of sanctifying grace, and the orientation of the justified soul…” and 517 “the state of grace as divine-human interpersonal situation.” In “Some Implications…,” Rahner speaks of this supernatural state as interpersonal insofar as he speaks of the divine persons and not just the essence/being of God as present in the sanctified.

²¹⁶ Lonergan, _A Third Collection_ 32.
effected by the gift of grace to reach its culmination in the vision of God, it must be responded to by a series of cooperative human decisions. Since, for Lonergan, this dynamic orientation must be sustained and developed by human decisions, being-in-love unrestrictedly is precarious; hence, the need for the theological virtues, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and other gifts.

When Lonergan speaks of grace in relation to nature, it is described as a state of perfection and completion because it actuates the unrestricted potency of human nature and enables it to serve ends far beyond its natural scope. In relation to the uncreated grace of God attained more fully in the beatific vision, the transposed equivalent of sanctifying grace (being-in-love unrestrictedly) can be expressed as a beginning, an incomplete and imperfect state, a dynamic openness. In relation to human nature, created grace and its transposed equivalent is understood and expressed as a state of completion and perfection, an elevation.\(^{217}\)

While the ‘supernatural existential’ is a mode of being in which the offer and invitation to love more perfectly and completely is experienced, there is a tendency in the writings of those who interpret Lonergan, especially when they focus on the grace-nature question, to think about ‘being-in-love in an unrestricted fashion’ as a dynamic state of one who has already reached a stage of complete and perfect loving.\(^{218}\) In relation to nature, which has been ‘wounded’ by sin, grace perfects, elevates, fulfills, and completes the person. But some tend to forget the fact that, concretely speaking, grace is the

\(^{217}\) Conceiving grace as incomplete potency and perfecting grace as act are not mutually exclusive positions if one considers the analogy of the rational soul. In relation to the body, it is a perfection because it actualizes a potency to be this form. In relation to absolute intelligibility, it can be understood as a potency, a desire, an openness, an incomplete and imperfect state. So habitual grace, as a kind of form, can be both potency and act in different respects.

\(^{218}\) For Lonergan, in being given sanctifying grace, one is given a new concrete principle of achievement, but not the finished achievement.
beginning of a supernatural life that must be sustained, developed, enriched, and intensified by the fragility of human decisions in order to reach the fullness of supernatural perfection in the beatific vision. In other words, some Lonergan scholars represent the ‘dynamic state of being-in-love in an unrestricted fashion’ as a grace that is always both operative and fully cooperative. In Method in Theology, ‘being-in-love’ is a compact term. It is a term that moves theology in the direction of third stage discourse and corresponds to what a second stage theoretical theology would identify as sanctifying grace; it can correspond to sanctifying grace as either operative or as operative and cooperative, depending on whether or not it is considered in itself or in relation to intentional acts of knowing and loving. In Lonergan’s words, “Finally, it may be noted that the dynamic state [of being-in-love] of itself is operative grace, but the same state as principle of acts of love, hope, faith, repentance, and so on, is grace as cooperative.”

But what does ‘being-in-love’ as an operative gift prior to the full cooperation of a subject refer to in consciousness? Concretely, what does it mean to experience ‘being-in-love’ as an operative gift prior to the complete reception and appropriation of the gift? What in concrete experience corresponds to the transition between ‘being-in-love unrestrictedly,’ as an initial orientation, and being-in-love as a principle of acts of knowing and loving? For Rahner sanctifying grace as operative, prior to its full reception, is described in terms of experience as a radical and mysterious offer and invitation (supernatural existential). The transition between grace as an initial orientation and the graced person as a principle of acts of loving, in Rahner’s estimation, is the self-transcending process of conversion and development.

219 Lonergan, Method 107.
Because Rahner considers what a theoretical theology calls sanctifying grace in the concrete context of conversion and development, he realizes that the initial gift of grace—what he calls the offer and invitation of the holy mystery—does not automatically produce a state of full cooperation; from a concrete perspective, grace is given to concrete historical subjects living in a sinful world. While grace is given as an unconditional gift to all, the appropriation or reception of the gift is neither immediate nor unconditional. There are conditions that need to be fulfilled, and the conditions have to do with subjects-as-subjects in their prior freedom, which is conditioned by their own free decisions and the decisions of others. So the full reception of the gift will require fulfilling the conditions for making different choices. This involves culture and community, other individuals, and is governed, in part, by what Lonergan would call an emergent probability, and as such, lies under the control of divine providence. In other words, the free reception and response of the gift is worked out in the context of human history and involves a divine-human interpersonal situation. The gradual appropriation of the gift in time is a process of conversion and development; since the process is not only genetic and statistical but also dialectical, it does not always advance in a straight line but, most of the time, includes a series of failures and successes. In light of his existential viewpoint, which distinguishes in consciousness between the gift of grace as such and its reception, Rahner can point out a distinction in experience between what a second stage theoretical theology called sanctifying grace as operative and sanctifying grace as both operative and cooperative. What Rahner means by ‘supernatural existential’ seems to correspond, in a second stage theoretical theology, to sanctifying grace as operative but not yet fully cooperative.220 What Rahner means by the

---

220 The self-communication of the absolutely holy God designates a quality sanctifying man prior to his free
existentielle has to do primarily not with discrete and isolated decisions but with a history of decisions within the orientation of one’s life—moved by a divine self-donation. As such, the existentielle seems to correspond, in a second stage theoretical theology, to sanctifying grace as operative and cooperative.

The ‘supernatural existential’ is not entirely incompatible with Lonergan’s meaning of ‘being-in-love.’ It is my contention that a consideration of ‘being-in-love unrestrictedly’ as an operative gift (a gift in which the subject is moved but not moving) in the concrete context of development, according to Lonergan, would yield a description similar to Rahner’s description of the ‘supernatural existential.’ The statements of Lonergan scholars regarding ‘being-in-love unrestrictedly,’ while not transposed incorrectly, may tend to express, rather one-sidedly, a condition of perfection, completion, and fulfillment—suggesting that the subject has fully appropriated the gift.

Considering grace in the concrete context of conversion and development allows one to distinguish in experience between grace as initial orientation and the various degrees in which the orientation is appropriated. The shift to a more concrete perspective allows one to transpose the distinction between what a theoretical theology refers to as the distinction between grace as operative and grace as both operative and cooperative into the categories derived from the exercise of self-appropriation.221

F. ‘Being-in-Love Unrestrictedly’ in Method in Theology

In Method in Theology, ‘being-in-love in an unrestricted fashion’ is a global and compact phrase. The precise meaning of the phrase shifts depending upon the context in

---

221 Lonergan did effect the shift to this more concrete perspective. See Lonergan, “Openness and Religious Experience,” Collection 185ff; see the process character of graced life in Collection 231.
which Lonergan employs it. In his chapter on “Religion,” while Lonergan draws a
distinction between ‘being-in-love’ as operative and ‘being-in-love’ as operative and
cooperative, he prescinds from the concrete historical process of conversion and
development through which the operative gift is effective as a principle of conscious living. In this section, ‘being-in-love’ is considered not in relation to the process of self-transcendence but in itself and in relation to the effects of the self-transcending movement it stimulates. For Lonergan, ‘being-in-love in an unrestricted fashion’ fulfills the capacity for self-transcendence. He explains:

That fulfillment brings a deep-set joy that can remain despite humiliation, failure, privation, pain, betrayal, desertion. That fulfillment brings a radical peace, the peace that the world cannot give. That fulfillment bears fruit in a love of one’s neighbor that strives mightily to bring about the kingdom of God on this earth.222

The affective state of a deep-set joy and other-worldly serenity, in itself, is the effect in consciousness of being-in-love as operative grace. The same affective state of deep-set-joy and other-worldly serenity as principle of loving operations and efforts is being-in-love as both operative and cooperative. It is important to note that, in his chapter on “Religion,” Lonergan considers being-in-love, in itself, as a “dynamic state of love, joy, peace” and as an effective principle of “acts of kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control.”223

In his chapters on “Dialectics” and “Foundations,” Lonergan speaks in general terms about the transposition of sanctifying grace into the language of interiority. In this context, Lonergan, raising a different set of questions, is asking not simply about the experience of grace in itself and in relation to its effects, but about the experience of

---

222 Lonergan, Method 105.
223 Ibid. 106.
grace in relation to the entire process of self-transcendence. Lonergan makes the point in his chapter on “Foundations:”

Traditionally that dynamic state [of being in love unrestrictedly] is manifested in three ways: the purgative way in which one withdraws from sinning and overcomes temptation; the illuminative way in which one’s discernment of values is refined and one’s commitment to them is strengthened; the unitive way in which the serenity of joy and peace reveal the love that hitherto had been struggling against sin and advancing in virtue. The data, then, on the dynamic state of other-wordly love are the data on a process of conversion and development.224

While Lonergan does not fully work out the meaning of ‘being-in-love’ in terms of interiority, in this more concrete context, he begins, in a very preliminary way, to describe the transition from being-in-love as operative to being-in-love as operative and cooperative. Lonergan remarks that

For Christians…God’s love flooding our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us…is the gift of grace [being-in-love unrestrictedly], and since the days of Augustine, a distinction has been drawn between operative and cooperative grace. Operative grace is the replacement of the heart of stone by a heart of flesh, a replacement beyond the horizon of the heart of stone. Cooperative grace is the heart of flesh becoming effective in good works through human freedom. Operative grace is religious conversion. Cooperative grace is the effectiveness of conversion, the gradual movement towards a full and complete transformation of the whole of one’s living and feeling, one’s thoughts, words, deeds, and omissions.225

According to Lonergan, ‘being-in-love in an unrestricted fashion,’ as operative grace, does not instantaneously produce a life of perfect charity. Rather, it initiates a process that Lonergan describes as a “gradual movement towards full and complete transformation.”

224 Ibid. 289.
225 Ibid. 241. Also see “Pope John’s Intentions,” A Third Collection, last sections.
Lonergan’s questions, to which the descriptions in these chapters are answers, ask about ‘being-in-love’ in relation to the full range of conscious data on the entire process of the conversion and development of a concrete historical subject. Accordingly, the existential experience of ‘being-in-love in an unrestricted fashion,’ as a dynamic state of the subject, is considered, at least in these passages, not strictly in itself (as a dynamic state of love, joy, peace) or as an effective principle of a spiritual achievement (love of God and neighbor) but as the source of a life-long process of struggle and trial that eventually bears fruit in the gifts of the spirit that Paul mentions in chapter 5 of his letter to the Galatians. In these passages, ‘being-in-love’ is described as the moving viewpoint of the one undergoing conversion and developing. The question animating these chapters is about the ongoing experience of the transformative encounter; it seeks not only to specify the conscious experience of being-in-love in itself and as an effective principle of spiritual achievement but also the conscious experience of becoming an effective principle of spiritual achievement; it asks about the slow, laborious, and painstaking process of self-surrender and self-disposal that the encounter that the mystery of love and awe activates; it asks about the experience that, despite efforts of resistance, prompts one to become more than who one originally was. In other words, it seeks to name what corresponds, in religious consciousness, to the gift of God’s love as the dynamic source of a self-transcending orientation that impels spiritual achievement.

If, in the concrete context of conversion and development, the dynamic state of being-in-love is an effective principle (cooperative grace) of a gradual process of self-transcendence, what in consciousness corresponds to ‘being-in-love’ as the source of a self-transcending direction in human living? In consciousness what corresponds to
second stage theoretical theology’s sanctifying grace operating in the context of the
dialectical and developmental dynamics of spiritual transformation? In other words, how
does the sinner encounter the divine gift in his experience? In Lonergan’s words, he
encounters it as “…an under-tow of existential consciousness,…a vocation to
holiness;”\textsuperscript{226} as “…a direction, a pattern, a thrust, a call, to unworldliness;”\textsuperscript{227} as an
experience of “a charged field of love and meaning; [that] here and there…reaches a
notable intensity; but…ever unobtrusive, hidden, inviting each of us to join.”\textsuperscript{228} The
language of “call” and “invitation” is strikingly similar to Rahner’s description of the
“supernatural existential.”

Lonergan says being-in-love unrestrictedly is a fulfillment that calls forth a “deep-
set joy” and “radical peace that the world cannot give.”\textsuperscript{229} It is, according to Lonergan,
“the conscious dynamic state of love, joy, peace that manifests itself in acts of kindness,
goodness, fidelity, gentleness and self-control.”\textsuperscript{230} The descriptions of being-in-love
expounded in Lonergan’s chapter on “Religion” are not incompatible with the accounts
of being-in-love in “Dialectics” and “Foundations. They express two perspectives on a
distinct and complementary set of conscious data. One perspective elucidates the content
of religious consciousness in itself and as the generative principle of good works, while
the other brings to light the content of religious consciousness as the dynamic basis for
the spiritual transformation of a concrete historical subject.\textsuperscript{231} For Lonergan, religious
conversion is both a being-in-love, enabling the activities of love of God and neighbor,

\textsuperscript{226} Ibid. 240.
\textsuperscript{227} Ibid. 290.
\textsuperscript{228} Ibid. 290.
\textsuperscript{229} Ibid. 105.
\textsuperscript{230} Ibid. 106.
\textsuperscript{231} Tad Dunne states that, for Lonergan, ‘being-in-love unrestrictedly’ is not an invitation to religious
conversion but is religious conversion—stressing the fact that sanctifying grace effects a new mode of
being.
and an invitation to love God and neighbor “with one’s whole heart and whole soul, with all one’s mind and all one’s strength” (Mk. 12, 30 emphasis mine). It is not only a being-in-love but also an invitation, an undertow, a vector, a pattern, a direction, a thrust to love more completely and a fated call to a more perfect state of holiness.\textsuperscript{232} It is being caught up in an orientation to an absolute mystery in which, even prior to total transformation, intimations of deep-set joy and other-worldly serenity become conscious as an experience of holiness that will be deepened and enriched more pervasively and intensely as conversion becomes more perfect. In other words, the state of spiritual joy and other-worldly peace evoked by the experience of the holy mystery does not in itself indicate a total and permanent spiritual achievement. Being-in-love unrestrictedly is an affective experience of being swept up in the tidal movement of the holy mystery that invites and calls and draws one to exercise a measure of kindness and fidelity, gentleness and self-control even prior to one’s total and permanent self-surrender that will elevate one to a perfect state of loving wherein one can truly “deliberate and judge and decide with the easy freedom of those that do all good because they are in love.”\textsuperscript{233}

G. Being-in-Love Unrestrictedly in Other Published Works

In his article on ‘religious experience,’ Lonergan asks “in what manner God’s love flooding our hearts is a human experience and just how it fits into human consciousness.”\textsuperscript{234} In this discussion, as he has elsewhere, Lonergan identifies “God’s

\textsuperscript{232} In his transposition of sanctifying grace, Robert Doran supports this interpretation. See Doran, “Consciousness and Grace,” \textit{Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies} 11 (1993) 54.

\textsuperscript{233} Lonergan, \textit{Method} 107.

\textsuperscript{234} Lonergan, “Religious Experience,” \textit{A Third Collection} 125.
love flooding our hearts” with an experience of ‘being-in-love unrestrictedly.’²³⁵ So religious experience in this context is what he means by ‘being-in-love.’ He writes,

...consciousness is like a polyphony, or like a concerto that blends many themes in endless ways. So too religious experience within consciousness may be a leading voice or a middle one or a low one; it may be weak and low and barely noticeable. Again, religious experience may fit in perfect harmony with the rest of consciousness; it may be a recurrent dissonance that in time increases or fades away; it may vanish altogether, or, at the opposite extreme, it may clash violently with the rest of experience to threaten disruption and breakdown.²³⁶

In his description, the fact that the dynamic state of being-in-love is not always the leading voice and does not always harmonize with the rest of consciousness means that being-in-love is an experience that belongs not only to saints but also to sinners. Being-in-love, while sometimes barely noticeable, is like an ever present voice in consciousness calling the subject to transcend himself more fully. In this passage, Lonergan tells us that the experience of being-in-love not only refers to state of mature and perfect loving wherein religious conversion has become totally effective; again, since it can ‘clash violently with the rest of experience and threaten disruptions and breakdowns,’ in its initial phases, being-in-love is also an experience of being caught in the throes of a love that calls and invites one towards the not yet present achievement of total and permanent self-surrender that is characteristic of mature religious loving.

In “Existenz and Aggiornamento,” Lonergan describes being-in-love in a way that is consistent with this theme:

St. Ignatius said that love shows itself more in deeds than in words; but being in love is neither deeds nor words; it is the prior conscious reality that words and, more securely, deeds reveal. That prior opaque and luminous being is not static, fixed, determinate, once for all; it is

petrocelli 142

precarious; and its being precarious is the possibility not only of a fall but also of fuller development.\textsuperscript{237}

Accordingly, in his article entitled “The Response of the Jesuit as Priest and Apostle in the Modern World,” Lonergan reminds his readers that

\begin{quote}
Being in love is not just a state of mind and heart. It is interpersonal, ongoing; it has its ups and downs, its ecstasies and quarrels and reconciliations, its withdrawals and returns; it reaches security and serenity only at the end of a long apprenticeship.\textsuperscript{238}
\end{quote}

This description applies equally to the course of human love. By analogy with human love, being-in-love unrestrictedly does not instantaneously and automatically produce a state of perfection. The security and serenity of being-in-love is the fruit of a life-long apprenticeship. Being-in-love unrestrictedly activates a process of transformation—a process of conversion and development—which, at the end of a long life, may mature into a “total and permanent self-surrender without conditions, qualifications, reservations”\textsuperscript{239} and bear fruit in a habitual “kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control.” (Gal. 5, 22) Since, according to Lonergan, the data on other-worldly love are data on conversion and development, the dynamic state of being-in-love unrestrictedly is experienced, at least initially, as a call and an invitation as well as a movement towards self-transcendence and only subsequently as a state of total and permanent surrender to that call. It seems that the meaning of Lonergan’s, being-in-love unrestrictedly as the pattern, direction, thrust, vector, undertow towards a state of perfection and as initiated by the invitation and fateful call to dreaded holiness parallels Rahner’s meaning of ‘supernatural existential.’


\textsuperscript{238} Lonergan, “The Response of the Jesuit,” \textit{A Second Collection} 173.

\textsuperscript{239} Lonergan, \textit{Method} 240.
H. The Limitations and Misappropriations of Scholastic Theology

Misappropriations of the scholastic theology of cooperative grace can also foster the tendency to, rather one-sidedly, identify ‘being-in-love unrestrictedly’ with an experience of a fully converted subject and thereby encourage a misunderstanding of the similarity between Lonergan’s ‘being-in-love unrestrictedly’ and Rahner’s ‘supernatural existential’ as the experience of a consolation without a proportionate cause that is subsequently interpreted as a sacred offer and invitation. The scholastic theology of cooperative grace was part of an answer to a more general explanatory question that inspired theologians of the middle-ages: how does one transpose the doctrines of the Faith from a narrative to a more theoretical framework of meaning? More specifically, how does one transpose Augustine’s anti-Pelagian theology of merit? How does one explain the role of human cooperation in the life of grace? In order to stress the universal instrumentality of divine governance, Aquinas explained the free and meritorious cooperation of the human will within the context of divine providence, understanding the doctrine of cooperative grace as a special instance of the general idea of divine instrumentality that emerged from placing Aristotelian physics in light of the theorem of divine transcendence. Lonergan explains the analogy at the core of divine instrumentality in terms of “the slightly difficult concept of ‘causing causation’” or ‘application.’ He writes:

Suppose Peter to stand sword in hand and then to lunge forward in such a way that the sword pierces Paul’s heart. In the process there are only two products: the motion of the sword and the piercing of Paul’s heart. But while the products are only two, the causations are three: Peter causes the motion of the sword; the sword pierces the heart of Paul; and, in the third place, Peter causes the causation of the sword, for he applies it to the act.

In this section, I am not accusing any Lonergan scholar in particular of a naïve realist misappropriation of Scholastic theology, but simply identifying it as a possible danger.
of piercing and he does so according to the precepts of the art of killing. The sword is strictly an instrument, and its very causation is caused. Now, if causation in general is a relation of dependence, a caused causation is a relation of dependent dependence. Again, if causation in general is a formal content, *ut ab agente in aliud procedens*, a procession, then to cause a causation is to make a procession proceed, to operate within an operation. Such is the proximate analogy of operation.241

The death of Paul results not only from Peter operating the sword but cooperating with the sword to produce the activity of killing. As Peter applies the sword to its activity of killing, God applies all agents to their natural activity. In this view, God employs the will of human beings and all other agents within the contingent universe as instruments in the implementation of his providential plan. By analogy, supernatural beatitude results not only from God operating upon the soul and the will but cooperating with the soul and the will to produce supernatural acts. As Peter operates the operation of the sword, so God operates the supernatural operations of human persons. In the context of divine providence, the soul and the will are, strictly speaking, divine instruments. By working out the meaning of operative and cooperative grace within the context of a general theory of instrumentality and of divine application, Aquinas placed the Church’s anti-Pelagian stance in an explanatory perspective.

But because Aquinas understands operative and cooperative grace in terms of a general set of metaphysical relations that obtain between creatures and God, his analysis operates at a significant level of abstraction. As such, Aquinas’ theology of cooperative grace brings to light not what is distinctive about the instrumental use of human freedom but rather, what it shares in common with all other instances of instrumentality in the contingent universe. Thus, human freedom is understood in abstract and general terms.

---

Because Aquinas, partly from his appropriation of Augustinian thought and partly because of his innate spiritual and philosophic aptitude, had at his disposal more sophisticated techniques of self-discovery, by distinguishing clearly between the specification and exercise of will, he was able to transcend the limitations of Aristotelian psychology and develop an account of the human will that was more differentiated than the account offered by Aristotle. Aquinas understands the will as an active potency, so that once the intellect specifies the object of the will, namely the good, resulting in an intelligible emanation from the intellect into the will, the will may move itself towards its goal. The self-activation of the will that sets the person in motion towards an apprehended good requires a free decision. For both Aquinas and Augustine, the will does not cease to be a will in the moment of divine operation. Despite God’s operating the will, the will remains free so long as its object is finite. It moves itself in making free decisions.What distinguishes the divine operation of the human will from other instances of divine operation is that God uses free human decisions to accomplish His will in the world. By considering operative and cooperative grace within the context of divine providence, Aquinas intends to establish that God uses human freedom as an instrument to bring forth human decisions and actions that nonetheless are supernatural. What he does not do is offer an explanatory account of how these decisions come forth.

Do these decisions emerge as the fruit of an existential struggle? Does human freedom resist being used as an instrument? How does one describe an experience of divine operation of one who resists the divine operation of his freedom? Is good performance simultaneous with divine operation on the soul or does good performance

---

242 In grace, God moves the will to an end which the will has no freedom to choose. In this case, the freedom of the will emerges in deliberating about the means.
result from a gradual appropriation of the gift of divine love over time? Is it both? If the latter, in what terms does one express the process by which God transforms the soul and the will into compliant instruments of divine love? Since these questions inquire about human freedom not in the abstract but in the concrete—since they ask about how to express divine operation and human cooperation in terms of the concrete historical subject—complete and fully explanatory answers require a shift from an abstract to a concrete perspective.

Lonergan uses the analogy of Peter piercing the heart of Paul to elicit an insight into the divine operation upon the human will. As Peter operates the operation of the sword, so God operates the operation of the will. But one must be careful about the use of such analogies. The point of the analogy is to demonstrate a proportion between two sets of relations. As Peter is the cause of the movement of the sword, so God is cause of the movement of the will. Drawing a parallel between the operation of a sword and the operation of the will conveys the idea that the motions of the will, though free, are operated by God. Peter operates the operation of the sword; God operates the operation of the will. The example does not intend to draw a parallel between God and Peter, nor does it intend to point out a similarity between the will as spiritual faculty and a sword as a material object. For this reason, the example does not establish a comparison between the physical motion of a sword and the motion of the will. What the analogy compares is the formal contents of a set of relations. In other words, the metaphysical analogy prescinds from the contents of the motion and considers the motion simply as intelligible relations of dependence of one thing upon another. For this reason, the analogy functions
at a significant level of abstraction. According to the analogy, the procession of a will to its term is itself dependent on a divine motion.

The mistake people make lies in the use of imagination in thinking of how the metaphysical analogies describe the instrumental causality of freedom as it exists concretely in the historical subject. If one imagines too literally a parallel between the movements of the soul and its faculties, on the one hand, and, the actual movements of physical bodies, on the other, one fails to grasp the relationship of intelligible dependence between mover and moved that Thomas exploits in its proper generality. The analogy of physical motion is not an invitation to think about the concrete movements of the soul and the will as if human freedom cannot resist being operated. A physical body cannot resist partially or absolutely, since it is not free. In Lonergan’s example, the operation of the sword is simultaneous with the operation of Peter. If one imagines the will on the model of physical motion, then one might suppose that grace is also simultaneously operative and fully cooperative because one imagines that the infusion of operative grace simultaneously and even automatically generates a life of perfect virtue. If one does not get beyond imagining that the spatial and temporal components of physical motion are relevant to the analogy, then one will collapse the generalization of intelligible relation of dependence (naïve realist “picture thinking”); and one will imagine that the soul and the will are like physical bodies, concluding that once operative grace is given to a subject, a life of perfect charity becomes instantaneously present. Instead, one has to attend to the interior data on the subject as subject to work out what divine supernatural operation and cooperation means in the context of a concretely situated freedom. An adequate transition from an abstract to a concrete perspective, far from supposing that the full
cooperation of the subject occurs all at once with the gift of sanctifying grace as operative or ‘being-in-love unrestrictedly,’ will take into account that ‘being-in-love’ as operative gift initiates a series of acts of knowing and deciding that emerge over the course of a lifetime with a greater or lesser degree of human cooperation. If one misunderstands the analogies and their application, one will overlook Rahner’s and Lonergan’s point that, for the most part, the soul and the will become pliant instruments of God not as an all at once\textsuperscript{243} outcome of divine operation but only through a series of free and hard won decisions throughout the time of a person’s process of conversion and development that the supernatural operation of God initiates and helps sustain; thus missing Rahner’s and Lonergan’s insight that the initial gift of divine love (what a theoretical theology calls grace as operative) corresponds, in experience, to an invitation and an offer to attain the supernatural perfection that blossoms forth as a later phase of the gift of divine love (what second stage theoretical theology would termed grace as operative and fully cooperative).

I. Some Interpreters of Lonergan on “Being-in-Love Unrestrictedly”

Lonergan scholars who have written on the topic of being-in-love unrestrictedly tend to work out its meaning in relation to the human reality. For this reason, these scholars, in their descriptions of being-in-love unrestrictedly, tend to speak of it in terms of a perfection, elevation, and a fulfillment of the human spirit rather than the way Rahner tends to refer to it, as a commencement of the blessed life. In other words, aside

\textsuperscript{243} The term ‘simultaneous’ is problematic because while the effects of the gift are temporal, the giving of the gift (sending of the Spirit) does not occur in time. The basis of the problem is a conception of eternity as a ‘present moment’ in the same way that one would understand the ‘present’ as a point relative to a subject on a temporal continuum. The ‘present’ or the ‘now’ are the best analogical approximations humans have to express the eternity of God; but even the most suitable metaphor or analogy falls short of conveying a proper understanding of eternity.
from Robert Doran, a consideration of being-in-love unrestrictedly in relation to the beatific vision, as a step in the concrete process of entering into absolute union with God, tends to be absent in recent Lonergan scholarship, insofar as Lonergan scholars think about being-in-love unrestrictedly as only an occurrence in the history of the person and in relation to a prior state of sin. From this viewpoint, being-in-love unrestrictedly is a conversion, a change of fundamental orientation in the person’s concrete living—discontinuous with the prior reality; it is a habit—a perfection of the creatures being; it completes, fulfills, elevates. In Lonergan’s occasional terminology, it gives rise to a fifth level of consciousness.244

Lonergan distinguishes levels of consciousness by modes of self-presence. For Lonergan, when one gathers data, imagines, listens, looks, he becomes present to himself as sensitive; when one raises questions for understanding, conceptually works out the implications of insights, he becomes present to himself as intelligent; when one seeks to know, weighs and marshals evidence, searches for the appropriate language that expresses the evidence grasped by a reflective insight, one becomes present to oneself as rational; when one raises questions about the good, assesses the circumstances, deliberates about the means, chooses, he becomes present to himself as responsible. Levels are distinguished not by the kinds of acts a subject performs but by the quality of self-presence concomitant with the acts performed.245 When operations render a subject present to himself as sensitive, he is operating on the first level of consciousness. When

---

244 Lonergan himself speaks of being-in-love unrestrictedly as a state of total and permanent self-surrender—which corresponds to sanctifying grace as operative and fully cooperative. Lonergan scholars who emphasize being-in-love unrestrictedly as a state of fully mature religious love are not incorrect; but sometimes there is an exclusion of descriptions of being-in-love unrestrictedly as an operative but not yet fully cooperative grace (which are also present in Lonergan’s writings).

245 For example, when one employs images in an attempt to understand, acts of imagination are, strictly speaking, intelligent acts because they render a subject present to himself as intelligent. For a more detailed explanation, see Byrne, *Method Journal* 13 (1995) 131-138.
operations render a subject present to himself as intelligent, he is operating on the second level of consciousness. When acts make a subject present to himself as rational, he is performing on a third level of consciousness. When acts mediate the subject to himself as responsible, he is operating on a fourth level of consciousness.

Operations are first, second, third, or fourth level operations because of the subject who performs them. That is to say, acts do not determine the level of the subject; rather, the subject determines the level of the acts. According to Patrick Byrne,

…I believe, Lonergan primarily thought in terms of the subject sublating itself by ‘operating’—that is to say, the conscious subject as the agent of the transcendental operators that transform the subject present-to-self on a lower level into the subject present-to-self on a higher level. This is most evident when a subject which had been merely empirically attentive (first level conscious) becomes puzzled about something, beings inquiring and pursuing insights in response to this inquiry…Sublation of self by self is, I believe, the proper way of speaking about the process of waking up, where the subject is quite literally bringing herself or himself from non-self-presence to empirical, first-level self presence.246

Since the subject brings herself from one level to the next, the subject is the ground of the operations.247 For example, when one is relaxing at the beach and enjoying the sounds and the sights of the waves and families having fun, she may be operating at a first level of consciousness. But when she hears someone cry, “Shark!,” her concern brings her to a fourth level of consciousness.248 At this level, the very same operations of looking and listening, which were first level acts just a second ago, are now transformed into fourth

247 The ground of the flow of consciousness involves the history of prior decisions that constitute subject to be the kind of subject that grounds orientation in conscious living. The orientation in conscious living fixes a horizon that conditions what questions one is open to, what data one will attend to, what feelings one will permit. For a more detailed explanation, see Lonergan, “Subject and Horizon ,” Phenomenology and Logic (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2001) 280-294).
248 The phrase ‘brings herself’ is not to be conceived as an act of deliberative freedom; it is more like Byrne’s example of bringing oneself from sleeping (below first level consciousness, except when dreaming) to waking (first level consciousness).
level acts. Looking and listening now become responsible acts that render the subject present to herself as one who is concerned. The subject determines the quality of the acts; the acts only make the subject present to herself as responsible because the acts originate in a responsible subject.

In a similar manner, when one performs acts that render the subject present to oneself as being-in-love unrestrictedly, one is operating on a fifth level of consciousness. Since the subject is the ground of operations, fifth level operations radiate from an unrestrictedly loving subject. In other words, when one operates on this level, one performs acts that flow from a person that has reached a stage or at least a moment of total commitment to God; acts performed on this level make present an unrestrictedly loving self as the ground of those acts. They make present a subject whose basic orientation in conscious living conforms to demands of the gospel message. These acts are performed by one who has reached, at least for a time, a peak of religious conversion; the acts performed on this level make present a self that has, in some sense, achieved a state of, what Dunne and Lonergan call, “total and permanent self-surrender.” It seems rather obvious that subjects are not always operating on a fifth-level of consciousness and performing fifth-level acts. If Lonergan thought that ‘fifth-level’ consciousness was always operative, why mention the other levels? Patrick Byrne offers some examples of persons and contexts in which ‘fifth-level acts’ may occur:

…it would be perfectly consistent to view at least some of Augustine’s, Aquinas’s and indeed Lonergan’s philosophical insights and writings as fifth-level acts. Indeed, Catherine Marshall, without having studied Lonergan’s work, speaks of an experience familiar to many Christians and non-Christians alike: insights which occur in the context of contemplative prayer or meditation.\footnote{Byrne, Method Journal 13 (1995) 141.}
The examples Byrne chooses are significant. Fifth-level acts originate from the minds and hearts of recognized saints of the Church or occur in special moments of contemplative prayer. In other words, fifth level acts occur in particular individuals and in particular “religious” moments. These texts seem to give the appearance that a fifth-level of consciousness is not a mode of consciousness present to all people at all times. It is a mode of consciousness that only saints can sustain or that everyone else can attain in punctual, perhaps fleeting moments throughout their lives. In other words, a fifth-level of consciousness is sustained by a select few or glimpsed by the majority of persons in those rare moments when they love their neighbor and God with a perfect love from a perfect heart.

In an article entitled “Being in Love,” Tad Dunne basically agrees with Byrne. He proposes an interpretation of Lonergan’s ‘being-in-love unrestrictedly’ that intends to distance it from Rahner’s notion of the ‘supernatural existential,’ when Dunne states, “We should also note that Lonergan identifies the gift of God’s love flooding our hearts with religious conversion, not with God’s invitation to such a conversion…The flood of love is not simply God’s offer of love; it is ‘total and permanent self-surrender.’” It is important to note that in Method in Theology, Lonergan identifies this ‘love flooding the heart’ with the notion of ‘being-in-love unrestrictedly.’ Lonergan writes,

> Being-in-love is of different kinds. There is the love of intimacy, of husband and wife, of parents and children. There is the love of one’s fellow men with its fruit in the achievement of human welfare. There is the love of God with one’s whole heart and whole soul, with all one’s mind and all one’s strength (Mk. 12, 30). It is God’s love flooding our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us (Rom. 5, 5).


\[252\] Lonergan, Method 105.
According to Dunne, ‘being-in-love’ (God’s flooding of our hearts) is not an *invitation* or an *offer* to religious conversion; it is religious conversion. But what Dunne seems to mean by religious conversion is the attainment of a mature state.

In a subsequent passage, Dunne makes this idea crystal clear:

> the ‘love of God’ to which Lonergan refers is quite unlike romantic love. Young adults may be inclined to compare it to an I-Thou love between lovers, where the appropriate metaphor is an exchange of gifts. Indeed, Lonergan’s penchant for the expression, ‘falling in love,’ reinforces this impression. But only as they grow old together do they realize the full dynamic of love, as the love between them floods over in a love that raises children, cares for neighbors, and labors for the commonweal. To understand the Christian agape, we do better to compare it to the mature versions of human love than to its wondrous beginnings.  

The claim that ‘being-in-love unrestrictedly’ refers to a perfected state of loving and not an invitation, an initiation towards perfect loving contrasts Lonergan’s meaning of ‘being-in-love unrestrictedly’ with what Rahner means by ‘supernatural existential.’ For Dunne, ‘being-in-love unrestrictedly’ refers to the culmination of spiritual development. It refers to a state in which the subject has become a cooperating principle of loving acts.

If some of these texts foster a simple identification between a ‘fifth-level of consciousness’ and what Lonergan means in *Method in Theology* by ‘being-in-love unrestrictedly,’ then it would seem to imply that the dynamic state of ‘being-in-love unrestrictedly’ is not, like Rahner’s ‘supernatural existential,’ a *universal* and , *omnipresent* mode of self-presence. In other words, these texts, at the very least, imply that what Lonergan means by ‘being-in-love unrestrictedly’ is not a state enacted by all people at all times. Furthermore, since ‘being-in-love unrestrictedly’ tends to be identified with a fifth level of consciousness, then it is less likely to be conceived as a

---

offer or an invitation but more likely to be conceived as the perfection grace or a fully realized grace. Unlike Rahner’s ‘supernatural existential,’ which is a perduring offer of grace to all individuals (a permanent existential), Lonergan’s followers seem to convey a sense of ‘being-in-love unrestrictedly’ as a perfected state of grace restricted to particular individuals and particular times.

J. The Experience of Grace as Orientation

First, the invitation of the holy mystery implies a religious orientation. The language of “invitation” and “offer” can be misleading. It can give the impression of a Pelagian or semi-Pelagian theology of grace. On the contrary, the offer of the holy mystery does not enable a choice to be made by a neutral freedom poised between sin and grace. For both Lonergan and Rahner, the self-donation of God in the gift of divine love...
orients or rather re-orients human freedom. Accordingly, one apprehends the offer and invitation within the context of a religiously oriented freedom. In its phenomenologically reduced form, the invitation and the offer of the holy mystery is experienced as the givenness of a direction, thrust, pattern, undertow, vector into mystery; in and through a process of intelligently grasping and rationally affirming the content of religious experience, it is interpreted more specifically as an invitation, an offer, a call of the holy mystery. In other words, theologians attend to and interpret the experientially given orientation and the term towards which the subject is oriented within the framework of Christian meanings and values. The call and offer and invitation are given in experience but rarely thematized or named, and if they are, only imperfectly. The divine mystery exceeds the capacity, scope, range of humans to comprehend adequately, and so the light of faith, hope and charity and the gifts of the Holy Spirit are needed in order to attain at most a symbolic or analogical grasp of the holy mystery. The call, offer, and invitation of the holy mystery are the contents of a religious experience that are usually apprehended, albeit inadequately, by asking and answering questions within the horizon of Christian beliefs, witness, and worship.

K. The Experience of Grace as Basic Orientation

The invitation and offer is a religious orientation of the basic freedom of the subject. The gift of divine love, in its original and most basic form (what second stage theoretical theology called sanctifying grace) is a determination of a subject’s basic but

---

256 See Lonergan, *Method* 341 and Rahner, *Foundations* 128. The fact that grace is not offered to a neutral freedom is confirmed by the tradition; one can even see instances within the lives of the prophets. For example, Jeremiah speaks of an experience of operative grace, in first stage of meaning discourse, as an experience of being moved. Jeremiah expresses his movement towards God in terms of the presence of desires that he did not choose: “You have enticed me and I have been enticed.” He speaks of it as a “fire in his bones.” These expressions give the sense that he was not coerced externally but moved from within. Since he was chosen in the womb, God was always orienting Jeremiah’s freedom towards himself. (See Jeremiah 20: 1-18)
not yet deliberative or reflective freedom. Since sanctifying grace is infused into the
essence of the soul and not in the will as appetitive faculty, it orients the subject and his
freedom at a more foundational level than freedom as regarding and choosing objects.
For Rahner, this basic or “originating freedom” is to be distinguished from the
“originated freedom” that concerns objects in the world of space and time. About this
originating freedom, Rahner writes,

>We can only say, then, that because and insofar as I experience myself as
person and as subject, I also experience myself as free, as free in a
freedom which does not refer primarily to an individual, isolated psychic
occurrence, but in a freedom which refers to the subject as one and as a
whole in the unity of its entire actualization of existence.257

He goes on to say that

>This freedom, then, is not a neutral power which one has and possesses as
something different from himself. It is rather a fundamental characteristic
of a personal existent, who experiences himself in what he has already
done and is still to do in time as self-possession, as one who is responsible
and has to give an account, and this includes the moment when a
subjective and personal response to the infinite and the incomprehensible
confronts this existent in his transcendence, and is either accepted or
rejected.258

While Lonergan alludes to Rahner’s distinction between originating and originated
freedom, Lonergan does not discuss these realities in a theological context but within the
philosophical context of phenomenology. Lonergan explains:

>There is a loose sense, then, an equivocal sense, in which the flow of
consciousness is free, inasmuch as it is not uniquely determined by the
sensible data or by one’s own biological, neural reality. There is also a
determinant from the direction of the flow of consciousness itself. It is
that prior freedom of which Heidegger is always speaking. He does not
mean freedom in the sense of the will; that is something beyond his
horizon, as far as I know. When he is talking about freedom, he is talking

258 Ibid. 38.
of this freedom of the self-constituting subject, of the subject as the
ground of the freedom of the flow of interests and concerns, of the subject
as grounded in his Sorge, in his care, in his concern. It is at that point that
we find the root of the horizon. In other words, Heidegger’s Sorge,
concern, care which lies behind the whole flow of consciousness, is also
what determines a horizon. It is, as it were, the nucleus, the fundamental
element, in the concrete synthesis of conscious living. It determines the
horizon within which lies our world, our potential totality of objects.259

This more basic freedom and responsibility as determined by the gift of divine love,
regards the self as a whole; it does not regard the self in one of its various modes; it does
not regard the self, simply as intelligent or rational or responsible; rather it regards the
self as ground of his entire flow of consciousness.260 The gift of divine love (sanctifying
grace) affects and further determines this basic freedom—reorienting the flow of
consciousness and opening up a new horizon; and so affects not only moral decisions but
the entire gamut of intentional activities. It opens up a horizon grounded in a love of God
that invites the person not only to love more deeply but to attend more fully, to think
more carefully, to judge more soberly, to communicate more effectively.261

What occurs with religiously oriented freedom, prior to being an object of choice
is the holy mystery becoming co-present in and through all intentional activities.262
Decisions about objects in the world reflect, mediate, and constitute a co-operative
response to the call of the holy mystery whose presence in experience is not as an
intentional object but the term of a self-transcending orientation that is not a deliberative

259 Lonergan, “Subject and Horizon,” Phenomenology and Logic (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2001)
292.
261 At times, Lonergan talks about the gift of divine love as opening up a new horizon beyond the levels;
but he also says that it exists on the fourth level of consciousness. See Lonergan, Method 106. Other times,
he talks about it as occurring at the ground and root of the fourth level. See Lonergan, Method 107. If one
is going to transpose sanctifying grace to psychological terms and relations, I believe the latter formulation
to be more accurate.
262 This is what theologians refer to as the indwelling of the persons of the Trinity.
choice.\textsuperscript{263} Though religiously oriented freedom, as the effect of the outpouring of divine
love, enables the subject to cooperate by transcending itself in relation to objects in the
world, such exercises of freedom directly respond not just to the objects but to the call to
self-transcendence. Successfully responding to the call of self-transcendence (by
deliberative decisions) and cooperating with one’s own orientation towards the holy
mystery (in a response that is spontaneous and not chosen) is both unpredictable, even
unknowable with certainty in retrospect.\textsuperscript{264} It cannot be known with certainty because the
cooperative response has to do with who one has concretely become—concretely
carrying through on the orientation in one’s conscious living; and who one thus becomes
is a product of that mysterious encounter of one’s own history of conscious decisions
(conditioned by the decisions of others and one’s own conscious and not so conscious
motives) with the gift of God’s love.\textsuperscript{265}

\textbf{L. The Experience of Grace as Conscious Orientation}

Now to say that the deliberative and cooperative response to the call cannot be
predicted or certainly known is not to say, however, that because the moral quality of the
deliberative response to the call of the holy mystery always remains precarious the call
itself is not conscious; one is aware of a direction, orientation, vector, undertow, a pull
towards self-transcendence. Since religiously directed freedom is an orientation of the
subject in a more basic sense that is irreducible to morality or rationality, the call,
invitation or offer of the holy mystery is felt whenever intentional operations mediate the

\textsuperscript{263} To qualify the response as cooperative is important because even without the subject’s cooperation or
appropriation, the orientation itself, as given, bears the character of a response; it is a response to a divine
initiative. See Lonergan \textit{Method} 119; also see Jeremy Wilkins, “Transposing Nature, Grace, and Virtue, Or,
If Grace is Love, What is Charity?”(Section IV) Lonergan Workshop 35, 2008.
\textsuperscript{264} See Rahner, \textit{Foundations} 97.
\textsuperscript{265} For a detailed discussion of freedom and external conditioning in the context of grace, see Rahner on the
subject to himself not only as moral or rational but simply as personal—on the level of one’s graced central form and act—as the ground of one’s concrete synthesis in conscious living. The call, invitation, and offer are addressed and made present in that most basic domain of interiority. Since the call is addressed to the subject-as-subject as ground and root of his concrete synthesis of conscious living, the subject is aware of the call as an element that remains constant throughout the fluctuations of one’s conscious self-presence. It is an immediate experience of the subject mediated by intentional operations; and so while the experience is never apart from intentional operations, it is a perduring experience distinct from, while permeating, intelligent, rational, and responsible self-consciousness. For both Rahner and Lonergan, to experience sanctifying grace as operative is to be conscious in each intentional act, in each failure to act, in each resistance to intentional self-transcendence, in moments of crisis, in feelings of anxiety and dread, of an orientation originating in the depths of oneself towards a mysterious transcendence.

M. The Experience of Grace as Intimate Presence of Mystery

It has been established that, in relation to the movement of self-transcendence, both Lonergan’s being-in-love unrestrictedly and Rahner’s supernatural existential are experienced as call, offer, and invitation. Both are similar inasmuch as the subject becomes aware of the mystery that calls and invites and offers itself not only as a distant and remote goal but as an abiding and intimate presence. According to Rahner,

The antecedent self-communication of God which is prior to man’s freedom means nothing else but that the spirit’s transcendental movement in knowledge and love towards the absolute mystery is borne by God himself in his self-communication in such a way that...this movement has its term and its source not in the holy mystery as eternally distant and as a

goal which can only be reached asymptotically, but rather in the God of absolute closeness and immediacy.²⁶⁷

Rahner goes on to describe how the ‘God of absolute closeness and immediacy’ is experienced:

He experiences rather that this holy mystery is also a hidden closeness, a forgiving intimacy, his real home, that it is a love that shares itself, something familiar which he can approach and turn to from the estrangement of his own perilous and empty life. It is the person who in the forlornness of his guilt still turns in trust to the mystery of his existence which is quietly present, and surrenders himself as one who even in his guilt no longer wants to understand himself in a self-centered and self-sufficient way, it is this person who experiences himself as one who does not forgive himself, but who is forgiven, and he experiences this forgiveness which he receives as the hidden, forgiving and liberating love of God himself, who forgives in that he gives himself, because only in this way can there really be forgiveness once and for all.²⁶⁸

Rahner identifies the supernatural existential as an orientation to mystery in which the mystery is experienced as an intimate presence that is forgiving, consoling, loving. When Lonergan’s articulation of the conscious reality of being-in-love unrestrictedly is notably similar to Rahner’s supernatural existential:

In that case the gift by itself [being-in-love unrestrictedly] would be an orientation towards an unknown. Still the orientation reveals its goal by its absoluteness: it is with all one’s heart and all one’s soul and with all one’s mind and all one’s strength. It is, then, an orientation to what is transcendent in lovableness and, when that is unknown, it is an orientation to transcendent mystery. Now an orientation to transcendent mystery is basic to systematic theology. It provides the primary and fundamental meaning of the name, God.²⁶⁹

In the chapter, “Religion,” Lonergan discusses being-in-love unrestrictedly as the basic fulfillment of conscious intentionality—a fulfillment that “brings a deep-set joy that

²⁶⁷ Rahner, Foundations 129.
²⁶⁸ Ibid. 131.
²⁶⁹ Lonergan, Method 341.
remains despite humiliation, failure, privation, pain, betrayal, desertion [and] a radical peace, the peace that the world cannot give.”

Like Rahner, Lonergan describes this conscious experience as an experience of the “holy mystery” and as a “dynamic state of love, joy, peace;” and he refers to Rahner when he identifies it as an experience of a “consolation that has no cause.” When Lonergan refers to being-in-love unrestrictedly as the basic fulfillment of conscious intentionality, he is using his own language to express what Rahner means by being conscious of the holy mystery in the mode of “absolute closeness and immediacy.”

Since conscious intentionality is unrestricted, for Lonergan, its fulfillment lies in the attainment of God. So in the measure that being-in-love describes a fulfillment of conscious intentionality, God is attained or rather becomes present to consciousness not in the mode of distance but in the mode of intimacy and closeness. Michael Vertin expresses being-in-love unrestrictedly in terms of intentionality as “the correlative of the notions intentionally possessing the primary component of their total fulfillment, even though such intentional possession is not yet realized.” The total fulfillment of conscious intentionality constitutes the experience of God as perhaps understood, known, and loved by Faith, Hope, and Charity uti in se est. Vertin’s “primary component” in the total fulfillment of conscious intentionality refers to the experiential component. In the dynamic state of being-in-love unrestrictedly, the subject experiences God not as remote term of transcendence but as immanent presence; it is a consciousness not just of the holy mystery but of the holy mystery present in the heart; it is an experience of the indwelling

270 Ibid. 105.
271 Ibid. 106.
272 Ibid. 106.
of the Holy Spirit. Lonergan expresses the experience in relation to the subject or recipient of the experience, as a fulfillment of conscious intentionality, while Rahner expresses the experience in relation to the source of the experience, as a becoming conscious of the God of closeness and immediacy.\textsuperscript{274} Both are speaking about an experience of union with the absolute and holy mystery, the “mystery of love and awe.”

When Lonergan talks about the different phases of the process of conversion and development as first purgative, then illuminative, and finally unitive,\textsuperscript{275} it is not meant to imply that union with God only occurs at the end of a life-long process. The self-communication of God in love (sanctifying grace as operative) produces a conscious dynamic state of being-in-love in which the subject experiences a union with the absolute and holy mystery. That initial union directs, guides, controls the purgative and illuminative phases. The purgative and illuminative moments are ways in which the person enters into a more profound union with God. In the union one feels the invitation and call to enter more deeply into that union. For both Rahner and Lonergan, the self-communication of God—or God’s gift of his love—orientates us to a transcendent and

\textsuperscript{274} Unlike Rahner, Lonergan does not tend to talk about an ‘experience of God.’ In “Absence of God in Modern Culture,” Lonergan writes, “the divine is not a datum to be observed by sense or to be uncovered by introspection” (Lonergan, “Absence of God in Modern culture,” \textit{A Second Collection} 102.) In his reflections on the natural knowledge of God, he states, “there are no data on the divine. God is not among the data of sense and he is not among the data of consciousness” (Lonergan, “Natural Knowledge of God,” \textit{A Second Collection} 120.) But while Lonergan may not admit data on God as God (at least in ordinary experience), there are data on God as mystery in ordinary experience. When Lonergan speaks of religious experience as possessing a content without an apprehended object, he means that in religious experience, one becomes aware of being in intimate union with absolute mystery. There is consciousness of God as indwelling mystery. There is consciousness of a union with God as mystery. Crowe remarks that Lonergan does talk about experience of God as God in mystical consciousness. He claims that when Lonergan says there is no data on God, “This is said, however, of ordinary experience and ordinary religious experience; Lonergan seems to have held from early on that in the mystics there is an ‘awareness of God’...” (Frederick E. Crowe, “Lonergan’s Universalist View of Religion,” \textit{Method Journal} 12 (1994) 156, footnote 22.)

\textsuperscript{275} See Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 289.
holy mystery that becomes present in consciousness not only as distant goal but also as consolation, peace, forgiveness, love that calls and invites and offers itself.276

N. The Experience of Grace as Affective Orientation

For Thomas Aquinas, conversion, at least initially (actual grace as operative), involves a change in the will of the end, about which human persons have no choice, as opposed to the will of the means about which persons may freely choose.277 Rather than expressing actual grace as operative, in the context of faculty psychology, as a change in the will of the end, Lonergan expresses religious conversion, in terms of intentionality analysis, as a vertical exercise of liberty by which the subject moves to a different horizon. Lonergan explains: “Joseph de Finance has drawn a distinction between a horizontal and vertical exercise of freedom. A horizontal exercise is a decision or choice that occurs within an established horizon. A vertical exercise is the set of judgments or decisions by which we move from one horizon to another.”278 The new vertical orientation that Lonergan calls the dynamic state of being-in-love unrestrictedly grounds new kinds of feelings as intentional responses to transcendent values.

Lonergan interprets the experience of grace in affective terms. To experience peace, love, joy, consolation, forgiving intimacy involves feelings. In Method in Theology, Lonergan talks about religious conversion as an affective transformation.279 In a 1970 interview, Lonergan remarks “what really reveals values and lets you see them is being in love.”280 Being in love primarily affects feelings; and the feelings flowing from

---

276 For both, the orientation to mystery is a result of the self-communication of God. The orientation is borne and opened up by the act of divine self-communication. See Rahner, Foundations 129. Also, for a comparison of Rahner and Lonergan on this point, see Doran, Method Journal 11 (1993) 64-74.
277 See Lonergan, Grace and Freedom 419-434.
278 Lonergan, Method 237.
279 Lonergan, Method 289.
being-in-love reveal values. Furthermore, Michael Vertin expresses religious experience as the “feeling of unrestricted being-in-love.”\textsuperscript{281} For Lonergan, and perhaps less explicitly but no less definitively in the works of Rahner, the experience of grace (religious experience) is also an affective state. As affective, it is an \textit{intentional response to value}.

First, it is not only a response, but an \textit{intentional} response. The orientation of the subject that determines the \textit{basic} freedom of the subject is not intentional in the way that attentive, intelligent, rational, responsible questions are intentional. Attentiveness and intelligent, rational and responsible questions are transitive: they intend or render present intelligible, real, valuable objects. Rather, being-in-love with God (the experience of grace) is intentional in the way that the unrestricted desire is intentional. According to Jeremy Wilkins, “In development from above, [being-in-love unrestrictedly] the remote operator is the same dynamism of conscious intentionality but as transformed by the intentional response of love.”\textsuperscript{282} The unrestricted desire intends unrestricted intelligibility, truth, goodness as its own transcendent fulfillment. In the dynamic state of being-in-love, the same terms are intended not as distant goals but, in the words of Rahner, as “close and immediate,” as already somehow attained.\textsuperscript{283} As Vertin explains,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item[\textsuperscript{281}] Michael Vertin, “Lonergan on Consciousness: Is There a Fifth Level?” \textit{Method Journal} 12 (1994) 21 (emphasis mine).
  \item[\textsuperscript{282}] Wilkins, “Transposing, Nature, Grace, and Virtue, or, If Grace is Love, What is Charity? (Section IV), Lonergan Workshop 35 (2008).
  \item[\textsuperscript{283}] Robert Doran claims that the experience is non-intentional seemingly because there occurs rest from intentional striving. See Doran, “Consciousness and Grace Revisited,” \textit{Method Journal} 13 (1995) 156. According to the position of the dissertation, the experience is, in fact, an intentional experience in the sense that it makes present the absolute mystery (not as object but as term of transcendence). Intentionality is only incidentally related to striving. Because one ceases to strive does not mean that one does not intend. Complacency (rest) occurs because God is made present to consciousness—because of intentionality.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
the dynamic state of being-in-love unrestrictedly is the possession of the primary component of the transcendental notions’ total fulfillment.\textsuperscript{284}

Second, it is not only an intentional response, but an intentional response to value. Patrick Byrne insightfully explains that

While it is commonly the case that intentional feelings arise from phantasms, this is not always so. For one thing, such intentional feelings may also arise in response to contents of insights or judgments. For instance, a feeling of ecstasy may accompany an insight especially long in coming, or a feeling of horror may arise in response to the judgment that something terrible has happened. For another thing, Ignatius of Loyola spoke of consolations that have no cause, and other great mystics have used similar language.\textsuperscript{285}

Byrne seems to be suggesting that ‘religious consolation’ is an intentional feeling that, while not responding to an object, nonetheless responds to an interior content. What is the interior content to which the intentional feelings of consolation or ‘deep-set joy’ or ‘radical peace’ respond? The content is the gift (God’s own self) given to and fulfilling conscious intentionality. The content is the absolute and holy mystery present in experience. As a fulfillment of conscious intentionality, the mystery is given as ultimate value. Since the religious orientation of being-in-love does not intend an unrestricted object but nonetheless makes present an unrestricted content, the value communicated is not objectified or known. The religious self-transcending feelings of consolation, joy, serenity, love respond to and reveal the holy mystery as the close, intimate, and abiding absolute value. The content that releases the feelings of other-worldly peace, love, joy, and consolation is an intimate union with other-worldly mystery.

O. The Experience of the Basic and Affective Orientation: A Transposition of Sanctifying Grace as Operative

The intentional response of peace, love, joy to the mystery that has communicated itself absolutely to the conscious subject creates an enduring affective state that is prior to and guides deliberative choice. In contrast to the transient feelings that arise as the subject passes from level to level, the feelings that emerge in response to the intimate presence of the holy mystery may remain constant throughout the permutations of conscious intentionality. Such feelings can be described as lasting as opposed to transient because they are not specified by qualitative changes in levels of consciousness but permeate all of them; they are not just responses to objects and they do not just emerge when the subject deliberates about courses of action; rather such self-transcendent spiritual feelings orient the subject as ground of his entire flow of consciousness within a new horizon. Such feelings are not only prior to deliberation but facilitate the entire process of ongoing conversion. Byrne argues that

The feelings which have become prominent will guide and control the flow of my deliberations. When self-transcending feelings do emerge and are allowed their full measure, their guidance and governance of the process of deliberation amounts to what Lonergan calls moral self-transcendence. Such feelings control the selection of presentations, memories, and images employed in the process of reaching insights…In particular, such feelings determine what questions are, and what questions are not, taken to be ‘pertinent’ as the subject seeks a virtually unconditioned value as ground for assenting or dissenting to a possible

---

286 Although Rahner did not speak of the religious orientation in terms of an affective movement, such language is not incompatible with his position.
287 Since levels and not operations render the subject present to himself in distinct ways (See Byrne, “Consciousness, Levels, Sublation, and the Subject as Subject,” Method Journal 13 (1995) 134-136), the feelings that arise in response to images or the contents of insights accompany the levels of consciousness on which the subject operates rather than simply the objects intended by the operations.
288 If my analysis is correct, then it would seem to suggest that the gift of divine love does not immediately produce a distinct level of consciousness if level retains its ordinary sense. It can be referred to as a level in an analogical sense.
course of action. In the deliberative process, therefore, pertinence is fixed by the subject’s actual feelings of intentional response to value.\(^{289}\)

Byrne refers to certain feelings that arise from images and regard objects, yet the same description is true of the feelings of love, peace, joy, consolation that respond to the intimate presence of the holy mystery. While the feelings that regard objects function as proximate affective operators that guide and control the deliberative process, the feelings of religious consciousness (love, joy, peace, consolation) function as remote affective operators of similar processes. In other words, the perduring religious feelings that belong to the most basic dimension of subjectivity stimulate, encourage, guide, and control, the transient and residual feelings that arise in moral self-transcendence.\(^{290}\) The affectivity of the subject is a complex, layered, multivalent, and dynamic reality in which moral feelings can be distinguished from feelings that are more properly religious.\(^{291}\)

Religious feelings overarch, underpin, interpenetrate, and sublate the whole range of operations and feelings of conscious intentionality.\(^{292}\) Religious feelings orient the subject as subject; they re-orient the basic ‘vertical’ freedom of subjectivity.

Religious affectivity is the remote operator of the self-transcending process.

Being-in-love with the mystery who fulfils conscious intentionality means that one does not simply desire but is in love with intelligibility, being, goodness. Such being-in-love


\(^{290}\) To some degree, the feeling can remain when one shifts from one mode of consciousness and to another; those carried over from one level to the next become residual feelings. These residual feelings can combine in endless varieties with the feelings accompanying the level on which one operates.

\(^{291}\) But feelings are not simply moral or religious; distinct feelings belong to intelligent and rational levels of consciousness

\(^{292}\) As with feelings in general, religious feelings change the tonality of consciousness. Like other feelings, religious feelings can become more intensified, diffuse, and developed; like other feelings, they admit of a plasticity and flexibility; and their emergence and course is not always under the control of the subject.
may transform the subject into a fertile ground of development by unrestrictedly
enlarging one’s horizon and opening one up to self-transcending intelligent, rational, and
responsible questions; it may engender a radical serenity vast and powerful enough to be
able to drown out the feelings of anxiety and dread that might stifle and suppress these
questions and the new life they promise; it may bestow a deep-set joy penetrating and
overwhelming enough to liberate one from the self-regarding bonds of depression and
despair that work to thwart spiritual development; it may beget a feeling of consolation
resilient enough to weather the insidious storm of guilt that assails consciousness; and it
may grant one a quiet assurance that one’s sins are forgiven and that, on the final score,
one’s worth is measured not by human standards by the immeasurable love of God.

But simply because being-in-love unrestrictedly gives consciousness an affective
orientation towards self-transcendence does not mean that it has already become an
effective principle—that it has been appropriated completely—in conscious living. It
does not render free cooperation automatic, so that a person who has the experience
would have already achieved intellectual, moral, or religious self-transcendence.

Lonergan uses a helpful analogy that illustrates the point. Of religious experience (being-
in-love unrestrictedly), he writes that

It is as though a room were filled with music though one can have no sure
knowledge of its source. There is in the world, as it were, a charged field
of love and meaning; here and there it reaches a notable intensity; but it is
ever unobtrusive, hidden, inviting each of us to join. And join we must if
we are to perceive it, for our perceiving is through our own loving.

---

293 The gift of grace does not necessitate but rather shifts the probabilities for receiving God fully in the
beatific vision.

Religious experience (being-in-love unrestrictedly) can be described as the music that fills a room. The sound fills consciousness, but not because of a deliberate decision; whether or not one finds the music agreeable depends on one’s prior formation. Then one may choose to listen to the music and allow oneself to be stirred by it or one may decide to ignore it. Analogously, the fact that the love of God suffuses consciousness does not imply a perfect participation in this love. The experience of being-in-love unrestrictedly as an affective state of love, joy, peace, consolation is a transposition of what second stage theoretical theology called sanctifying grace as operative.
Chapter IV
The Universal Experience of Grace and the Challenges of Post-Modernism

In a post-modern philosophical milieu, the universalism of Rahner’s and Lonergan’s theology of religion has come to be considered passé at best, and, at worst, a continuation of the same imperialism and politics of oppression that drove the crusades and inquisition. From the militant post-modern perspective, the “liberal” theology of Rahner and Lonergan dismisses the genuine otherness of the other by interpreting her in terms of distinctively Christian meanings and values. The purpose of chapter four is to use Rahner’s and Lonergan’s account of grace in terms of experience, developed in chapter three, to work out a theology of religion that responds to the challenges posed by post-modernism. My contention is that Rahner’s and Lonergan’s theology of grace can ground the notion of a common consciousness of grace and take seriously the claim of a genuine variety of religious experiences.

A. Rahner’s and Lonergan’s Universalist Theology of Religion

The Catholic Church, since the second Vatican Council, has affirmed the possibility of salvation for non-Christians with unprecedented vigor. The council members claim that salvation

...holds true not for Christians only but for all persons of good will in whose hearts grace is actively invisible. For since Christ died for all, and since all are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the Paschal Mystery.”

295 Gaudium et Spes (22)
The possibility of salvation outside the confines of the Christian religion is, for Catholics, an established theological fact. But while the Catholic Church supports the idea of salvation outside the parameters of the Christian faith, it professes ignorance about the means by which that salvation occurs. Non-Christians are saved “in a way known to God.” The document does not specify the means of salvation but appeals to the mystery of divine providence. So it is one thing to talk about the salvation of non-Christians; to ask whether or not salvation for non-Christians occurs through the universal gift of sanctifying grace is a further question; but to ask whether the experience of that gift is universal is an even further question. The focal question of the final chapter of the dissertation is not whether God offers non-Christians the gift of his love; as a Catholic Christian, I presuppose that He does. The question of the final chapter is whether non-Christians have a different experience of that love. Do Christians and Buddhists have a common experience of grace? Is there a core religious experience shared by Christians and Hindus? Is there, in the data of consciousness, a pre-reflective and pre-interpretive religious experience? Both Lonergan and Rahner answer in the affirmative. In his discussion of the topic of “Religion,” Lonergan refers to Frederick Heiler’s enumeratation of seven features common to all world religions. Lonergan writes,

While I cannot reproduce here the rich texture of his thought, I must, at least, give a list of the topics he treats: that there is a transcendent reality; that he is immanent in human hearts; that he is supreme beauty, truth, righteousness, goodness; that he is love, mercy compassion; that the way to him is repentance, self-denial, prayer; that the way is love of one’s neighbor, even one’s enemies; that the way is love of God, so that bliss is conceived as knowledge of him, union with him, dissolution into him.296

---

Lonergan goes on to say that “it is not difficult to see how these seven common features of the world religions are implicit in the experience of being in love in an unrestricted manner.” In an interview conducted a couple of years later, Lonergan makes an explicit reference to the Buddha and says, “So you can have an experience of God’s gift of his love…It’s an experience you can see on the face of the Buddha.”

In another essay, Lonergan refers again to Buddhism: “…anything affirmed is thereby objectified, and any objectification is a withdrawal from the ultimate solitude of the mystical state. The alleged atheism of the Buddhist may be, perhaps, the expression of non-objectivized experience.” Finally, Lonergan remarks, “The posture and, above all, the features of the Buddha at prayer radiate a serenity that reveals what might be meant by authenticity attained.” These statements reflect a commitment to Lonergan’s idea that religious experience is an unmediated pre-reflective and pre-interpretive experience. For Lonergan, religious experience is interpreted and expressed differently by the different world religions not because the experience is different but because the questions to which the interpretive descriptions are answers are historically and socially conditioned. Crowe points out that Lonergan refers to the work of Willaim Johnson for whom, as Lonergan claims, “[religious] experience is common to East and West, morally uplifting, cosmic in orientation but, when interpreted, takes on the distinctiveness of diverse traditions.” Moreover, Lonergan’s statements are in concert with the position of Karl Rahner, for whom the experience of grace is “the experience which is given to every person prior

---

297 Ibid. 109.
298 Interview with Lonergan: Jan 18, 1973 recorded and transcribed by Richard Renshaw.
301 Lonergan, Third Collection 67
According to commentator Thomas Kelly, for Rahner, “original experience takes a priority over language, though any actualization of such experience, and any reflection or communication of it, presumes language. Thus, Rahner explicitly rejects both Proudfoot’s and Lindbeck’s understanding of doctrine as solely constructive of experience.” While some may suggest that doctrines on God are prior to and constructive of religious experience, Rahner maintains that “The experience of God is prior to any such teaching, underlies it, and has to be there already for it to be made intelligible at all.”

**B. Unity as Implication of the Universalist Position**

In “Son of God, Holy Spirit, and World Religions,” Frederick Crowe comments on the idea of a universal experience of the gift of divine grace, and claims that it bears directly on the question of the relationship between Christian and non-Christian faith communities. Crowe writes,

> What I am affirming, then, is our religious community with the world religions is in some true and basic sense of the word, community, if not in the full sense of a common confession of faith, a common worship, and a common expression of hope in the eschaton. This community is effected by our common religious conversion, which, in Lonergan’s view, is our common orientation to the mystery of love and awe through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who is given to us. We do not, therefore, go to the world religions as to strangers, as to heathens, pagans, enemies of God. For we are one with them in the Spirit, and expect to find in them the fruits of the Spirit.

With Rahner and Lonergan, Crowe affirms not only a common gift of grace but a common consciousness of that gift. The idea that Christians and Buddhists are not only

---

given the same gift of grace but experience the gift in the same way means there exists a deep affinity between them. The idea that, beyond a common set of basic moral values, the other world religions are animated by the same religious experience affects the manner in which Christians view the practitioners of other faith-traditions. With this perspective, Christians will see the Buddhist and the Hindu not as strangers, heathens, or adversaries but rather as allies, friends, and even family members in the most genuine theological sense of the word. The idea of a common unmediated experience of grace will encourage Christians to open their minds and hearts to the hidden treasures of other faith communities. It will encourage Christians to consider the doctrines, symbols, stories, rituals, and spiritual practices of a Buddhist, for example, as embodiments of divine love. It will cultivate, in Christians, a deep respect and even enthusiasm for Buddhist religious symbols and customs as, in some analogous sense of the term, sacraments of the one holy mystery that abides in their own hearts. It may even promote a Christian appropriation of Buddhist spiritual practices. The Dalai Lama thinks it beneficial for Buddhists and non-Buddhists to share each other’s traditions. He explains:

Though I don’t recommend that a person abandon his or her native religion, I believe that a follower of one tradition can certainly incorporate into his own or her own spiritual practice certain methods for spiritual transformation found in other traditions. For example, some of my Christian friends, while remaining deeply committed to their own tradition, incorporate ancient Indian method for cultivating single-pointedness of mind through meditative concentration. They also borrow some tools from Buddhism for training the mind through meditation, visualizations related to developing compassion, and practices that aid with increasing patience…Buddhists can incorporate elements of the Christian tradition into their own practice—for instance, the tradition of community service. In the Christian tradition, monks and nuns have a long history of social work, particularly in the fields of health and education. In providing service to the greater human community through social work, Buddhism lags far behind Christianity.306

Given the belief in a common consciousness of grace, the Christian is free to view, for example, the divine self-emanation techniques of Tantric Buddhism or the more austere methods of Zazen meditation as enriching practices that not only mediate and heighten his own experience of divine love but open up and unlock depths of meaning within that sacred experience.

Furthermore, the idea of a shared core religious experience will eradicate the biases that obstruct genuine communication and partnership. As a result, it will promote inter-religious dialogue, which has not only academic but also personal and global benefits. The problem of inter-religious dialogue is largely the problem with communication in general. It requires, at least in part, a shared language. But since the doctrines and scriptures of eastern and western religions present incompatible cosmological paradigms, this common language must be developed from another source. According to Rahner and Lonergan, the basis from which to derive over-arching religious categories is not sacred scripture and doctrine but the prior common consciousness of grace, apprehended by means of transcendental method. Since transcendental method prescinds from the incarnate Word and its historical mediations, it allows for a direct study of the divine-self relation in immediate consciousness. As such, it makes present a set of experiential data on the basis of which one can, in the optimistic words of Fred Crowe, “develop a language in which to communicate across the borders of the religions.” Clarifying religious consciousness as the ground for a common horizon of meaning not only creates a context for mutually enriching dialogical encounters, on a
personal level, but also sets the conditions for Christians and non-Christians to ignore their differences and work together to advance the humanitarian goal of world peace.

C. The Philosophical Challenges of Post-Liberal Theology: The Priority of Language

Despite the appeal of Lonergan’s and Rahner’s universalist view of religious experience, George Lindbeck contends that the very notion of a pre-reflective and pre-interpretive experience—an unmediated experience of the holy—is untenable. Lindbeck explicitly draws from Wittgenstein and employs his notion of language-games in his argument. But while Wittgenstein is the remote source, Lindbeck seems to be more directly indebted to the work of Thomas Kuhn. Within Lindbeck’s cultural-linguistic model, particular religions seem to function as “paradigms.” In short, Lindbeck works out a post-liberal position that inveighs against the priority of religious experience endorsed by the so called “liberal” theologies. Lindbeck summarizes his invective against Lonergan and Rahner with the following succinct remarks:

Stated more technically, a religion can be viewed as a kind of cultural and/or linguistic framework or medium that shapes the entirely of life and thought. It functions somewhat like a Kantian a priori, although in this case the a priori is a set of acquired skills that could be different. It is not primarily an array of beliefs about the true and the good (though it may involve these), or a symbolism expressive of basic attitudes, feelings, and sentiments (though these will be generated). Rather, it is similar to an idiom that makes possible the description of realities, the formation of beliefs, and the experiencing of inner attitudes, feelings, and sentiments. Like a culture or language, it is a communal phenomenon that shapes the

---

307 Lindbeck mentions Kuhn (8, 42) and remarks that “…basic religious and theological positions, like Kuhn’s scientific paradigms, are invulnerable to definitive refutation (as well as confirmation).” (Lindbeck The Nature of Doctrine (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1984) 132.)

308 In The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Kuhn makes clear that his theory applies strictly to scientific paradigms and analogously to other paradigms. In Philosophical Investigations, Wittgenstein did not distinguish between a strict and analogous application of “language games.” The Kuhnian notion of ‘paradigm’ seems to be a more expansive and developed cultural-linguistic model than Wittgenstein’s ‘language game.’ For this reason, it is more suitable for the post-liberal theology of Lindbeck.
subjectivities of individuals rather than being primarily a manifestation of those subjectivities. 309

Lindbeck goes on to say that his cultural-linguistic model of religion reverses the relation between inner and outer. Instead of deriving external features of a religion from inner experience, it is the inner experiences which are viewed as derivative. Thus the linguistic-cultural model is part of an outlook that stresses the degree to which human experience is shaped, molded, and in a sense constituted by cultural and linguistic forms. There are numberless thoughts we cannot think, sentiments we cannot have, and realities we cannot perceive unless we learn to use the appropriate symbol systems…There can be no experiential core because, so the argument goes, the experiences that religions evoke and mold are as varied as the interpretive schemes they embody. Adherents of different religions do not diversely thematize the same experience; rather they have different experiences. Buddhist compassion, Christian love and—if I may cite a quasi-religious phenomenon—French Revolutionary fraternite are not diverse modifications of a single fundamental human awareness, emotion, attitude, or sentiment, but are radically (i.e. from the root) distinct ways of experiencing and being oriented toward self, neighbor, and cosmos. 310

Lindbeck accords language a priority in the language-experience dynamic and so renders problematic any idea of a pure, unmediated and universal experience of grace that spans across the borders of the religions. But Lindbeck challenges the so-called “experiential-expressive” model on other philosophical grounds as well. Lindbeck comments:

Because this core experience is said to be common to a wide diversity of religions, it is difficult or impossible to specify its distinctive features, and yet unless this is done, the assertion of commonality becomes logically and empirically vacuous. Lonergan himself acknowledges that it is logically odd. He speaks of it as an experience of love, but also admits that it alone among inner, nonsensory experiences seems to be prior to all conceptualization or cognition. 311

310 Ibid. 34, 40
311 Ibid. 32
Lindbeck here argues that if the experience is prior to the distinction of subject and object, truly pre-reflective and pre-conceptual, then it rules out the possibility of describing that experience. What is ‘it’ that is common to all religions, if the experience is not some ‘it’ as distinct from another ‘it’? If the experience is prior to distinctions, and language operates by distinguishing, how can language express the experience?

In addition, Lindbeck challenges the universalist view on ethical grounds. With respect to interreligious dialogue, Lindbeck regards the lack of a common core religious experience, averred by the proponents of the cultural-linguistic model, to be an advantage that ameliorates the relationship between Christians and non-Christians. In Lindbeck’s view,

This lack of a common foundation...means, on the one hand, that the partners in dialogue do not start with the conviction that they really basically agree, but it also means that they are not forced into the dilemma of thinking of themselves as representing a superior (or an inferior) articulation of a common experience of which the other religions are inferior (or superior) expressions. They can regard themselves as simply different and can proceed to explore their agreements and disagreements without necessarily engaging in the invidious comparisons that the assumption of a common experiential core makes so tempting.\(^{312}\)

To sharpen Lindbeck’s point, the cultural-linguistic mindset tends to evoke attitudes of tolerance and distanced appreciation instead of the sanctimonious attitudes of judgment and condemnation to which an experiential-expressive model of religion is prone. Even worse, in words that would surely resonate with Lindbeck’s sentiments, the universalist view “betrays a benign contempt for the aims and practices of other religions as they actually exist.”\(^{313}\)

\(^{312}\) Ibid. 55
D. The Challenges of Post-Modernism: What about the Other?

In general, post-modern philosophers or theologians challenge the universalism such as Rahner’s or Lonergan’s on the grounds that it de-emphasizes the ‘historical particular.’ If the external word of all religions express and mediate the same basic transcendental orientation, then, as the argument goes, the particular, as a sign of the religious experience within a given faith tradition, loses its distinctiveness. For the post-modern, the universalist view becomes tantamount to a kind of Hegelian Idealism in which the uniqueness of the particulars gets swallowed up in the Universal sweep of the Spirit. Post-modern thinkers, out of their concern for the integrity of the other, oppose the universalism of Rahner and Lonergan as a way of preventing its flattening out effect on the particularity of other religious traditions.

The universalist position of Rahner and Lonergan will be opposed more vociferously by those in the Levinas-Derrida tradition. The philosophy of Lévinas is a response to the perceived absence of an ethical dimension in the writings of Martin Heideggar. Lévinas thinks that Heideggar’s ontology of Dasein, despite its purported claim to have moved beyond the transcendental reduction, carries vestiges of the same Cartesian ego that haunted the thought of Edmund Husserl. For Lévinas, a philosophy in which subjectivity is foundational precludes the possibility of genuine ethics. Lévinas implements a deconstructive analysis reminiscent of Frederick Nietzche insofar as the whole apparatus of intentionality rooted in the transcendental ego, no matter how innocuous it appears, is an insatiable “will to power.” For Lévinas, in representing and interpreting the Other in terms of the self, intentional consciousness appropriates the Other and thereby converts her into an object to be used or ab-used by the subject. Of

314 See Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine* 35
course, the historical and paradigmatic instance of such appropriation and enslavement is, for Lévinas, the genocide at Auschwitz; and this becomes the impetus for his writings.

In the opinion of Lévinas, employing a reduction that allows one to attend to the Other not as the term of an intentional desire but as the source of a counter-intentional gaze that short-circuits and de-centers the subject and its hegemonic efforts finally delivers on phenomenology’s promise of overcoming the subject-object split and the host of epistemological problems it generates. In other words, Lévinas believed that this methodological shift would emancipate the subject from the solipsism of the transcendental ego and thereby realize the purpose of phenomenology which is, as summarized by the shibboleth of Husserl, return zu den Sachen selbst. For Lévinas, the way to allow beings, especially beings who are persons, to “show themselves from themselves” is not through an analysis of the transcendental structures of subjectivity or through an ontological consideration of Dasein, but by surrendering to the luminous presence of the Other mediated by the face. It means that one must ‘suspend’ intentionality and allow oneself to be transformed by the Other and continually re-defined by the relationship to the Other that the Other gives. In short, it means allowing oneself to receive from the Other the gift of one’s own subjectivity. By displacing the subject and according absolute priority to an Other that lies beyond the horizon (beyond the curvature of space)\(^{315}\)—and thus according priority to Difference—Lévinas believes he has opened up a space for the ethical within phenomenology.\(^{316}\)

Since the exponents of the experiential-expressive model believe the experiential core of their own religion is shared by others, they may tend erroneously to interpret the

\(^{315}\) Lévinas uses the metaphor of curved space and Height to refer to the fact that the Other is beyond intensionality.

\(^{316}\) See Lévinas, Totality and Infinity (Duquesne University: Pittsburgh, PA 1969) 194-219.
stories and symbols, rituals and practices of the other in terms of the meanings and values of their own religion. Because of the experiential-expressive paradigm, the Christian’s expectation, for example, of finding similarities with Buddhism can be so strong that, in dialogue, he may overlook authentic difference and falsely import Christian interpretations into Buddhist texts. From the post-modern perspective, the act of interpreting the Other in terms of the self reveals the spirit to control and assimilate that emerges in the guise of a “pure and unrestricted desire to understand.” To respect the Other is to preserve the integrity of the Other; it is to let the Other be Other. For Lévinas and Derrida, to ignore, or worse, to dismiss the otherness of the Other and, in dialogue, understand the Other in terms of the Same reflects the colonizing and totalizing machinations of intentionality; it is to carry out an act of violence. As a consequence, post-modern thinkers who align themselves with the intellectual trajectory of Lévinas and Derrida will be suspicious of any hermeneutic that prioritizes similarity over difference.

E. The Problem of a Theology of Religion from a Post-Modern Perspective

From the post-liberal and post-modern perspective, a theology of religion can propose a universalist view and affirm communion at the expense of the particularity and uniqueness of other faith experiences; or it can support a non-universalist stance and preserve the integrity of other faith experiences at the cost of a perceived communion with the other religions. In other words, one can assert either a common core experience and deny a variety of religious experiences or one can insist on a variety of religious experiences and deny a common unity of religious experience. One can claim that religious experience is prior to the language employed to describe it or one can claim that
religious language is prior to religious experience. In short, a theology of religion can either emphasize sameness or difference but not both.

F. The Solution of Mark Heim: A Mitigated Universalism

Mark Heim attempts to navigate between these two extremes and work out a theory of religion that safeguards the unity of faith traditions while preserving the distinctiveness and integrity of each religion. But in harmony with the post-moderns, Heim seems to stress the uniqueness and difference of other religious traditions. Heim comments, “For the liberal the problem is similar. It is not some abstract common truth ‘behind’ the religion some vague universal revelation that explains the tradition’s power.”317 Heim takes for granted the thesis that religious experience is not common but diverse and believes, contrary to the statements of Frederick Heiler, that there is ample empirical evidence to corroborate this claim. Furthermore, Heim thinks that from the variety of religious experiences, one can infer a variety of religious ends. He writes, “Christian theologians have spent a great deal of time considering whether there are varying ways to salvation. They have spent little time considering whether there are different, real religious ends that are not Christian salvation at all.”318 By positing a multiplicity of religious ends, Heim is able to preserve the distinctiveness and integrity of the of non-Christian faith communities. Heim remarks that the very typology of inclusivism, exclusivism, pluralism assumes a common religious end.319 By challenging that assumption, Heim makes the case that religions have their own evaluative criteria and thus cannot be more or less or equally true ways of realizing a single goal. In his own words, “there is no ‘metatheory,’ no neutral place that allows us to judge from above

317 Heim, The Depth of Riches 2
318 Ibid. 3
319 Ibid. 3
the religions rather than among them. But if neither an experience nor a goal is shared with other religions, how does Heim argue for unity? According to Heim, though the experiences and the goals are multiple, the transcendent reality to which they refer is single. Heim seems to preserve unity by appealing to a single complex ultimate reality. He explains:

In a simple analogy, we might compare this to our experience of a person we know in a certain context as a neighbor or coworker. At some time, we might hear from others who claim to know a quite different dimension of this person: perhaps they served with him in war or know him as an outstanding musician or as a former professional athlete. We would respond one way to these alleged experiences if we felt confident that we had a near-exhaustive familiarity with the person. We would respond quite differently if our own experience already included intimations of unknown spaces, years unaccounted for, signs of a prior life, even an indefinable sense of depth in the person. Strictly speaking, we had no experience of these other facets. But we might receive these new “contradictory” accounts as reasonable confirmation of our prior intimation of something undisclosed.

For Heim, the deeper assumption of the inclusivism, exclusivism, pluralism typology that grounds the idea of a single religious end is that ultimate reality is simple instead of complex. Heim articulates a theology of religions that emphasizes the sameness and unity of the universalist position (religions relate to a single transcendent reality) and, at the same time, the uniqueness and difference favored by the post-modern position (truly different experiences and different religious ends).

But it is a moderate universalism that Heim espouses. The deep sense of communion implied by the universalist theology of Rahner and Lonergan is absent from the theology of Heim. In other words, working with Heim’s analogy, the communion between two individuals who experience the same person but experience him in different ways.

---

320 Ibid. 6
321 Ibid. 39
ways is relatively superficial in comparison to the communion and unity of two individuals who experience the same person in the same way. Two brothers, because of a shared familial experience, have a deeper unity than a teacher and a parent who may experience the same children in vastly different ways. Consequently, while Heim’s position can be considered universalist at some base level, that deep sense of unity and communion, expressed by Rahner and Lonergan, is compromised in favor of an emphasis on difference and distinctiveness. With the post-moderns, the concern for the Otherness of the Other seems to dominate Heim’s theology of religion. Though Heim does navigate between these extremes to a degree, he still remains to some extent caught in the either/or disjunction of the post-modern problem: either Sameness or Difference, not both.

G. The Solution of Rahner and Lonergan: Transcending the Either/Or Disjunction

My thesis is that the universalist theology of Rahner and Lonergan transcends the disjunction and can affirm both sameness and difference; it can ground both the deep communion that arises from affirming a shared core religious experience as well as the genuine uniqueness of other faith traditions; it can accommodate the seemingly polarized claims that language shapes religious experience and that religious experience is, in some sense, prior to language; in short, it is not compelled to embrace the distinctiveness and particularity of the other at the expense of union.

H. The Experience of Grace: the Domain of the Subject-as-Subject

Rahner and Lonergan can affirm unity and difference with equal emphasis because what they mean by religious experience is different from what Lindbeck and other post-modern thinkers tend to mean by religious experience. For Rahner and Lonergan, religious experience or an experience of grace expresses in terms of
consciousness what a second stage theoretical theology expressed in terms of Aristotelian metaphysics. For scholastic theology, grace (sanctifying grace) is radicated in the essence of the soul while the supernatural virtues are radicated in the rational potencies. In the contemporary transposition, the essence of the soul corresponds to [an experience of] the subject-as-subject. Therefore, the experience of grace (religious experience) would involve a sacred experience neither of an object nor of the subject as object but of the subject-as-subject. How is an experience of the subject-as-subject distinct from an experience of the subject as object or an experience of other objects? For Rahner and Lonergan, objects become present through intentional acts in intelligent, rational, and volitional operations; acts of raising questions, thinking, deliberating, and deciding also render objects present to a subject. The subject is no exception. When one thinks, raises questions, deliberates, and decides about his own subjectivity, the subject becomes present to himself as an object. But concomitant with the presence of the object, the subject is always present to himself as subject. In the words of Rahner,

\[\text{In the simple and original act of knowledge, whose attention is focused upon some object which encounters it, the knowing that is co-known and the knowing subject that is co-known are not the objects of knowledge. Rather the consciousness of the act of knowing something and the subject’s consciousness of itself, that is, the subject’s presence to itself, are situated so to speak at the other pole of the single relationship between the knowing subject and the known object…This subjective consciousness of the knower always remains unthematic in the primary knowledge of an object presenting itself from without. It is something which goes on, so to speak, behind the back of the knower, who is looking away from himself and at the objects.}\]


Objects, as what are intended by questions, lie in the foreground of consciousness as focal points within the field of attention. The experience of the subject to which Rahner
refers is not an experience of some object. The experience of the subject-as-subject is a background or peripheral experience that occurs whenever one is focused on some object. While a subject experiences the objects of her operations directly, she experiences the operations themselves and her own subjectivity, as the source of those operations, indirectly. Her indirect or peripheral experience encompasses a consciousness of self that is distinct from objects, the operations that regard them, and the feelings that are evoked by them. It is an immediate experience of the subject that is mediated by intentional operations; and so while the experience is never apart from intentional operations, it is a perduring experience distinct from and interpenetrating intelligent, rational, or responsible self-consciousness. It is what Rahner refers to when he says, “This subjectivity is itself an irreducible datum of existence, copresent in every individual experience as its a priori condition.”

Since the experience of grace (religious experience) is an experience of the subject-as-subject, the experience of grace is not the experience of some religious object. As Rahner explains:

Hence the original knowledge of God is not the kind of knowledge in which one grasps an object which happens to present itself directly or indirectly from outside. It has rather the character of a transcendental experience. Insofar as this subjective, non-objective luminosity of the subject in his transcendence is always oriented towards the holy mystery, the knowledge of God is always present unthematically and without a name, and not just when we begin to speak of it. All talk about it, which necessarily goes on, always only points to this transcendental experience as such, an experience in which he whom we call “God” encounters man in silence, encounters him as the absolute and incomprehensible, as the term of his transcendence which cannot really be incorporated into a

323 The subject as subject as a distinct datum of consciousness is not experienced as separate, but in some sense, as part of an undifferentiated experience that is prior to the distinctions given in language.


325 Rahner, Foundations 31.
system of coordinates. When this transcendence is the transcendence of love, it also experiences this term as the holy mystery.  

Rahner goes on to say that “Mystery is something with which we are always familiar, something which we love, even when we are terrified by it or perhaps even annoyed and angered, and want to be done with it.”327 While the experience of the subject-as-subject is an experience that becomes immediately present through the operations of a subject, its content is not entirely dependent on the apprehension of particular objects and the qualitative modulations of consciousness effected by the apprehension of those objects. In the same way, the experience of grace, as part of the experience of that original self-presence, is made present to the subject through particular intentional operations but its content is not entirely dependent on the objects of those operations, the operations themselves, or the feelings that are evoked by those operations and objects. The experience of grace, for Rahner and Lonergan, is an unthematic experience of deep communion between the subject and the term of her transcendence whenever she intends objects in the world. This deep communion gives rise to a dynamic state of affectivity that Lonergan expresses as deep-set joy, radical peace, and other-worldly love. This state of affectivity does not emerge in direct response to particular objects or sets of operations but refers to an enduring and global set of feelings; such feelings emerge in direct response to the unmediated and wordless experience of unity between the transcendent mystery and the core of subjectivity.328

326 Ibid. 21. See also Lonergan, Method 103, 106.
327 Ibid. 22
328 Andrew Beards finds Rahner to be counter-positional and disagrees with the thesis that there is a parallel between Rahner and Lonergan, especially on the idea of consciousness. See Beards, Gregorianum 87 (2006) 262-283.
I. The Complexity of Religious Experience:  
A Universalism with Space for the Other

In the third chapter, I distinguished between moral and religious feelings. I argued that moral feelings are intentional responses to finite value-objects that are apprehended through the intentional operations of perceiving, imagining, understanding, judging, deciding; when the value-objects possess a religious content, the feelings that respond to them can be considered religious or quasi-religious. Examples of such feelings in a Christian context include forgiveness, guilt, and gratitude. They can be considered religious with respect to their objects but not with respect to their mode. In contrast, I said that religious feelings are intentional responses to the absolute value that is apprehended in an unmediated experience of union with the holy mystery. These religious feelings, as immediate, are not intentional responses to values that arise directly and spontaneously from phantasms and other intentional objects such as sense perceptions, formulations, and judgments; by contrast, these feelings are not dependent on the objects of intentionality or on the images evoked by them. Religious feelings, since they do not intend an object but a term of transcendence, parallel the ‘pure and unrestricted desire.’ In other words, religious feelings are intentional responses to the experience of union with the holy mystery in the immediacy of consciousness. Since they respond to and reveal the holy mystery in an unmediated fashion, these feelings are religious both in their object and in their mode. Moreover, as intentional responses to the experience of union with the transcendent in the immediacy of consciousness, they may arise independently of intentional objects and operations. Consequently, the content of these feelings is not wholly determined by the questions or concerns (since both regard
objects) of a given faith tradition. Such feelings, described by Lonergan as radical peace, deep-set joy, other-worldly love, transcend the language and horizon of particular faith communities. From this perspective, religious experience is a pre-reflective and pre-interpretive experience that is not determined by religious language.

George Lindbeck opposes this view and contests the notion of an unthematic and pre-interpretive experience. He writes,

One way to make the point is by means of the classic medieval distinction between first and second intentions...the first intention is the act whereby we grasp objects, while the second intention is the reflex act of grasping or reflecting on first formal intentions. In the modern philosophical language of consciousness, we are only unthetically (or in Polanyi’s terminology, “tacitly”) aware of first intentional activities while we are engaged in them our attention is focused on objects, not on the subjective experience involved in knowing them. It is only in the second intention that we attend to this experience, that we are focally rather than tacitly aware of it. Yet this does not lead us to suppose that the first-intentional experiences, for example, attending to Fido or to the logical characteristics of the concept of animal are somehow preverbal or linguistically unstructured. Surely, so the argument goes, the same could be said of religious experiences. They can be construed as by-products of linguistically or conceptually structured cognitive activities of which we are not directly aware because they are first-intentional.329

Because these intentional activities of which one is tacitly aware regard objects that are brought to light by language, it is true the tacit experiences of first-intentional responses are, in some sense, by-products of linguistically structured cognitive activities. But religious experience does not only regard an object illumined by language; its compass includes the wordless and immediate presence of the term of self-transcendence. In some instances, guilt, forgiveness, gratitude are religious feelings that are structured, in some sense, by a prior set of interpretations. These feelings emerge within a horizon; the meanings and values embedded within the stories, rituals, symbols, and myths that

329 Lindbeck, Nature of Doctrine 38
constitute the external word of the Christian religion are the condition for their possibility. But the content of the religious experience of other-worldly love, deep-set joy, and radical peace is not dependent on the apprehension of objects; therefore, these religious feelings, occurring in the immediacy of consciousness, transcend religious language. For Rahner and Lonergan, religious experience is not only pre-reflective but preverbal and pre-interpretive.

Therefore, one can distinguish in religious experience a horizontal vector of affectivity from a vertical vector of affectivity. The horizontal vector intentionally responds to value-objects mediated by the world of space and time; the vertical vector is an intentional response not to an object but nonetheless to a value-content that is apprehended in the immediacy of subjective experience. When Lonergan and Rahner talk about the experience of grace or religious experience as a common experience that spans across the borders of the religions, they are referring to the vertical vector of affectivity; they are referring to the feelings that emerge in direct response to the unmediated and wordless experience of unity between the transcendent mystery and the core of subjectivity. They are not referring to the horizontal vector of affectivity that responds nonetheless to the ultimate value, but to the ultimate value as communicated and interpreted by the finite stories, symbols, rituals, and images that constitute a faith-tradition.

From the viewpoint of Lonergan and Rahner, the universality of religious experience does not mean, for example, that Christian acts of love and Buddhist acts of compassion bear the same religious content. Christian love of neighbor and Buddhist compassion express horizontal vectors of affectivity within religious experience.
such, the value-objects that each feeling responds to and reveals is a term within a field of meaning distinctive to each faith-tradition. In other words, since the value-object (in this case one’s neighbor) will be interpreted differently within each faith-tradition, the feelings that respond to these value-objects may be different. From the perspective of Lonergan and Rahner, one could fully grant Lindbeck’s claim that “Buddhist compassion [and] Christian love…are not diverse modifications of a single fundamental human awareness, emotion, attitude, or sentiment, but are radically distinct ways of experiencing and being oriented towards self, neighbor, and cosmos.” Since the Buddhist horizon of meaning differs radically from the Christian horizon of meaning, the feelings that regard objects within that horizon may differ from the feelings that regard objects within the Christian one. The horizontal vector of affectivity regards objects within a given horizon. Since the horizons of Christianity and Buddhism are different, the affective response to those objects may differ also.

In contrast, the vertical vector of affectivity does not directly regard objects mediated by a given horizon but responds to an immediate and wordless experience of unity between the transcendent and the core of subjectivity. Consequently, with respect to the vertical vector of affectivity within religious experience, one can speak of a shared religious experience between the Buddhist and the Christian; with respect to the horizontal vector of affectivity within religious experience, one can speak of a notable difference. From the perspective of Lonergan and Rahner, one can even integrate the

---

330 One might speculate that Buddhism does not have an experience quite parallel to the Christian experience of forgiveness because forgiveness presupposes a certain understanding of the self, the divine, and the origins of negative behavior that are not shared by the Buddhist. There is no Buddhist equivalent of sin because sin assumes that evil results primarily from an act of will; it also assumes, more remotely, personal identity. Buddhists believe the origin of negative behavior to be ignorance and certainly challenge the idea of personal identity, at least conceived in Christian terms.

331 Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine* 40
cultural-linguistic thesis that the language and practices of a religious tradition shape religious experience of the practitioners within that tradition, inasmuch as religious experience may refer to the horizontal vector of affectivity vis-a-vis religious value-objects mediated by a religious horizon. If, however, Lonergan and Rahner can grant Lindbeck’s claim that religious language and practice constructs religious experience with respect to the horizontal vector of affectivity, they still affirm a priority of religious experience with respect to the vertical dimension.

Mark Heim disputes the assumption of the simplicity of the divine plan undergirding the theological typology of religions. Despite his admission of a multiplicity of ends, Heim attempts to preserve unity among faith communities by asserting the complexity of the divine reality. Not unlike Heim, I am arguing that the disjunction, either sameness or difference, is generated because of a covert assumption in the post-modern and post-liberal perspective. The post-modern position assumes that experience is simple rather than complex. It truncates the idea of experience by excluding the subject-as-subject from the data of consciousness and tends to associate experience, rather one-sidedly, with an experience of objects.  

Without a methodical appropriation of interiority, post-modern thinkers overlook entire domains of consciousness. Identifying experience in general and religious experience in particular with the experience of linguistically mediated objects precludes the possibility of a pre-linguistic and pre-interpretive experience shared by those traditions that do not share a language. Identifying a realm of interiority in which the subject experiences her communion with the transcendent, even if also being conditioned directly by objects in the world mediated by meaning, is integral to the universalism of Rahner and Lonergan.

---

332 See Lindbeck, Nature of Doctrine 38-39
They are able to emphasize, beyond the variety of religious experience generated by a variety of linguistically mediated objects, an experience that transcends linguistic and cultural boundaries, and therefore also able to acknowledge real unity among religious traditions as well as real difference.

Once one differentiates the vertical vector from the horizontal vector of affectivity so that not all religious experience is completely conditioned by linguistically mediated objects, it becomes clear that the content of the vertical dimension of religious experience is not totally dependent on linguistically mediated objects or the feelings and operations that regard them. But what is the relationship between the radical peace, deep-set joy, and other-worldly love of the vertical dimension of religious experience and the operations and feelings that regard religious objects? While the content of the vertical dimension of religious experience is not totally exhausted or determined by the objects intended in the horizontal dimension of religious experience, it still only becomes immediately present by virtue of a primordial intentional orientation to the world. Rahner refers to this as mediated immediacy. Operations and feelings that regard religious objects within a given horizon of meaning mediate the subject to herself in the immediacy of consciousness. Intentional operations and feelings that regard linguistically and culturally mediated objects make present the experience of grace within the experience of the subject-as-subject. Certain operations and feelings can also serve to express and heighten that experience of grace. Since the content of this experience is not entirely dependent on operations of the subject, it is present despite sin. But religious and moral practices, because they embody and express that subjective experience of the holy mystery, also heighten awareness of the vertical vector of affective-religious experience and the
absolute mystery such an affectivity reveals and to which it responds. Even though the affective experience of union with the holy mystery can be heightened, it remains, by virtue of what it is (an experience of the subject-as-subject), a peripheral or background experience that cannot be exhaustively made explicit. Despite one’s attention to it, the experience remains an experience of a subject not an experience of an object.

For Rahner and Lonergan, who are not Idealists but realists, both the experience of grace (religious experience) that occurs in the core of subjectivity and the experience generated by the apprehension of religious objects are constitutive of the concrete human historical reality. Therefore, neither the vertical nor the horizontal vectors of affective-religious experience can be excluded from a consideration of the concrete reality of the human person. Since the horizontal vector of affectivity accounts for differences in religious experience and the horizontal vector is a constitutive feature of the human reality, there is not only real sameness between religious practitioners but real difference. The universalism of Rahner and Lonergan is able to ground real unity and real diversity among religions and their practitioners.

J. Is There a Concept of Grace in the Buddhist Tradition?

It is my contention that there are Buddhist analogies of the divine gift of self that Christians call grace. In Buddhism, Buddha-nature or the absolute nature of mind is the term that, in the Christian world-view, would most closely resemble the concept of God. In his discussion on the three bodies of the Buddha, Chagdud Tulku comments on this ultimate reality. He writes,
…darmahkaya, the absolute nature of mind beyond ordinary concepts, can be likened to the sun; the second, rupakaya, or form kaya, can be likened to the sun’s brilliant radiance, which occurs naturally and without effort. This radiance, manifesting for the benefit of others, has two aspects: the sambhogakaya, the pure form manifestation perceptible to great practitioners; and the nirmanakaya manifestation that arises for the benefit of those unable to receive the sambhogakaya expression.334

According to the understanding of Vajrayana Buddhism,335 it is the nature of the ultimate or absolute to communicate itself in order to generate an enlightened state in the minds of all sentient beings. The Buddhist view is not unlike the Christian idea that the compassionate self-communication of God effects a transformation in creatures that the tradition refers to as religious conversion. Because the Buddhist understanding of absolute mind is not personal in the same way that the Christian God is personal, this view of divine self-offering, in some ways, more closely parallels Plotinian emanation, where the divine flows to creatures from necessity rather than from a divine decision that could have been otherwise. In this respect, it would seem to preclude claiming a complete structural similarity with the Christian concept of grace. But while the absolute radiates the qualities of the Buddha out of necessity, by virtue of its compassionate nature, the reception of those qualities is not automatic; in other words, from the perspective of Mahayana (and more specifically Vajrayana) Buddhism, the transformation of a sentient being from a state of ignorance to a state of enlightenment is not governed by laws of necessity.

334 Chagdud Tulku, *Gates to Buddhist Practice* (Padma: Junction City, CA 2001) 125. There are also Christian analogies that employ the image of the sun to express the divine.

335 The Vajrayana tradition grew out of the Mahayana movement. It radicalizes the basic Mahayana principle of unity between nirvana and the world. It stresses the idea that the world is a sign of the ultimate and inseparable from it. Therefore, one does not need to escape from world to attain enlightenment; rather enlightenment comes through an engagement with the world—through phenomena, events, activities.
Chagdud Tulku explains that, “Just as we must expose ourselves to the sun to benefit from its warmth and light, we need to make ourselves receptive to the [Buddha’s] blessings through our own effort.”336 But what does it mean to “make ourselves receptive?” The extent to which a sentient being is receptive and disposed to the Buddha’s blessings and teachings is determined by one’s karma. If there is ‘law of necessity’ in Vajrayana Buddhism, it is karma. According to Chagdud Tulku, “We need to become absolutely certain of the infallibility of the karmic process constantly at work in our lives. Our endless suffering, our experiences of higher and lower states of rebirth, are rooted in the *inexorable* unfolding of good and bad karma.”337 Tulku explains that Karma is like a seed that, under the proper conditions, will yield a plant. If you sow a barely seed, you can be certain you’ll get a barley shoot. The seed won’t produce rice. The mind is like a fertile field—all sorts of things can grow there. When we plant a seed—an action, a statement, or a thought—it will eventually produce fruit, which will ripen, fall to the ground, and generate more of the same. Every moment, we plant potent seeds of causality with our body, speech, and mind. When the right conditions come together and our karma ripens, we will have to deal with the consequences of what we have planted.338

In Vajrayana Buddhism, while non-virtuous actions produce negative karma, it is possible to purify one’s collective negative karma and avoid its consequences. The idea that negative actions produce negative results is not a necessary but a conditional law of the universe. It is true that negative actions will produce negative results *on the condition that* negative karma remains unpurified.339 While the law of karma is necessary (negative karma produces negative consequences, positive karma produces positive consequences) the degree to which negative past actions will concretely bear fruit in future suffering

336 Ibid. 241
337 Ibid. 80 (emphasis mine)
338 Ibid. 78
339 See Gates to Buddhist Practice 78-79
depends on whether or not and the degree to which one has purified the negative karma one has accumulated from past negative actions. From the Vajrayana perspective, one authentic act of compassion—performed with the right intent and flowing from wisdom (what the tradition calls bodhicitta—compassion informed by wisdom)—is so powerful that it can purify countless lifetimes of negative karma.340

It is here that Buddhist ignorance, not unlike the Christian notion of sin, becomes an existential problem. Ignorance gives rise to negative actions, which produce negative karma and suffering; negative karma tends to generate negative actions, which in turn, generates more negative karma and suffering. Buddhists refer to this self-perpetuating cycle of suffering as the state of samsara. When sentient beings respond to suffering out of ignorance, more suffering results. Breaking the cycle of ignorance and suffering requires a purification of karma; a purification of karma requires an act of bodhicitta. But performing act of bodhicitta presupposes a compassionate wisdom that is only attained by transcending the state of ignorance. How does one break the cycle of ignorance and suffering? As with Christian teachings on sin, liberation from the cycle of ignorance and suffering comes in the form of a divine gift. In Vajrayana Buddhism, buddhas and bodhisattvas transfer their abundance of accumulated merit (good karma) to ignorant beings caught in the cycle of suffering through ‘prayers of dedication.’ Tulku explains:

The merit we create through our practice can be dedicated to the benefit of all beings. If we were in a dark house, the light from one butterlamp could illuminate an entire room and everyone present would benefit. When all the oil was burned, the light would go out. Whoever added oil to the lamp would make the light last longer, and everyone would benefit. In a similar
way, whoever creates virtue and dedicates it to all beings helps the collective merit of all beings last longer.\textsuperscript{341}

He further explains that “because the merit of buddhas’ and bodhisattvas’ prayers and dedication has accumulated over time, they can effortlessly manifest countless emanations to help an enormous number of beings.”\textsuperscript{342}

What I am referring to as divine gifts within the context of Buddhist cosmology can be either interior or exterior.\textsuperscript{343} According to the Vajrayana perspective, the lama mediates the spiritual qualities of the Buddha to those who, in faith, have apprenticed themselves to him. The lama is a conduit through which the gifts of the Buddha can flow to sentient beings. In Chagdud Tulku’s analysis,

Devotion to the lama should not be construed as excessive, mindless dedication to someone whose intentions may be questionable, like that of a slave to his master. We feel devotion for the lama not for his sake, nor to please or make him rich, but to increase our receptivity so that waves of blessings and merit can infuse our mindstream.\textsuperscript{344}

In Chagdud Tulku’s interpretation, consciousness is transformed directly through an interior infusion of blessings and merit. But while some divine gifts are interior and infused directly into consciousness, others are exterior and operate through the mediation of events or persons in the world. Chagdud Tulku tells the story of Asanga, a great Indian Buddhist practitioner. Asanga “went into a cave and meditated night and day on Maitreya Buddha. After six years, he hadn’t had a single auspicious dream or vision—no

\textsuperscript{341} Ibid. 154
\textsuperscript{342} Ibid. 204
\textsuperscript{343} In Buddhism, divine gifts are analogous to interior and exterior graces in the Christian tradition. For Augustine, by exterior grace God changes and manipulates the environment in order to precipitate a conversion. An example from Augustine’s autobiography is the fortuitous meeting with Bishop Ambrose. Augustine believes this event to be the result of God orchestrating events in his life to bring about a change of heart. By interior grace God changes the heart directly.
\textsuperscript{344} \textit{Gates to Buddhist Practice} 238
After leaving the cave and returning several times within a span of twelve years, Asanga left discouraged. In Tulku’s words,

Walking down the road this time, he encountered a very sick dog. The lower half of her body was rotten with gangrene and filled with maggots. Missing her two hind legs, she could only drag herself along the road, yet she snapped at everyone around her. Asanga’s heart moved. “This poor dog,” he thought. “What can I do to help her? I have to clean the wound, but then I might kill the maggots. I cannot take the life of one to preserve the life of another; every life has value.” Finally he decided that by carefully licking the maggots away from the wound he could save both the insects and the dog. It was a revolting idea, but he closed his eyes and leaned over. When he opened his mouth, his tongue touched not the animal but the ground. He opened his eyes. The dog was gone and there stood Buddha Maitreya.

In that one act of compassion, Asanga had purified his karma and thus created the disposition for a vision of Maitreya Buddha. Asanga could not break free from his own self-concern until he was moved to an act of compassion by the appearance of a maggot-infested dog. Buddha moved the heart of Asanga through an exterior event in the world. Only when Asanga finally focused on another suffering being and forgot about his selfish goal to be enlightened did he become enlightened.

K. Christian and Buddhist Descriptions of Religious Consciousness

While Rahner’s and Lonergan’s theology of religion is helpful, it is still only a heuristic whose value remains to be verified. But how could a universal experience of grace be verified if the descriptions of religious consciousness differ? Without a Christian’s becoming a Buddhist, which presents challenges of its own, how can the Christian verify that a Buddhist has the same experience if he expresses the experience differently? This requires that when expressing the content of religious consciousness, Buddhist and Christian theologians purify, as much as it is possible, their descriptions of

345 Ibid. 85
346 Ibid. 86-87
distinctively Buddhist and Christian interpretations. It requires that, when attending to religious consciousness, they employ a phenomenological *epoche* and ‘bracket’ the meanings and values ensconced in the stories, rituals, myths, practices, cosmologies, and doctrines of their own traditions. It requires that theologians, as much as it is possible, implement the phenomenological practice of ‘attending simply to the data of consciousness as data.’ Since the experience of grace, as an experience of the subject-as-subject, transcends the distinctions of subject and object, language, which relies on that distinction, will fail to adequately express it. As Crowe points out,

> what is common is God’s pure gift and what it does to human consciousness, and as we cease to reflect on this, as our experience approaches the purity of its infrastructure, it becomes wordless; still, we must talk, even the mystics do that (if only in obedience to a spiritual director), and so we continue to attempt the impossible.\(^{347}\)

Thus, while a completely purified description may not be possible, the theologian can still approximate the purity of the experience in language. In the process of purifying descriptions, the theologian begins with a description of religious consciousness and asks and answers a series of questions about the extent to which he is importing external concepts. In the end, Buddhist and Christian descriptions of religious consciousness will not be the same. But by purifying their descriptions as much as possible, Buddhist and Christian descriptions will present more similarities and parallels.\(^{348}\)

**K.1 The Experience of Grace and Nirvana**

---


\(^{348}\) The method of purification is only helpful if one is trying to verify a universal or shared experience. If one is attempting to bring to light different elements within this depth experience, it is important to retain the differences. Such differences become valuable because they elucidate different aspects of interior experience. A full comparative theological exercise will employ both methods.
The juxtaposition of the experience of grace with the Nirvana experience of Buddhism is intended not as an exhaustive comparison but merely as a provocative exercise.

K.2 The Simultaneity of ‘Grace’ and ‘Sin’

In the theology of Rahner and Lonergan, the experience of grace is an experience of unity with and orientation towards the absolute holy mystery that is prior to and independent of acts of deliberative freedom—even acts whereby a person chooses against the absolute and holy mystery.\(^349\) From this perspective, the simultaneity of grace and sin is a possibility. In his discussion of the Heart Sutra, the Dalai Lama writes,

\[
\text{...we understand nirvana to be the ultimate nature of one’s mind at a stage when the mind has become totally cleansed of all mental afflictions. As we have seen earlier, it is because the mind is innately pure, which is to say it has Buddha nature, that simple removing the obscurations to clarity reveals enlightenment; thus, the emptiness of the mind is said to be the basis of nirvana, its natural nirvana.}\(^350\)
\]

From the Tibetan Buddhist perspective, ignorance and mental afflictions do not prevent nirvana, but obstruct the full experience of an already present nirvanic consciousness. The analysis of the Dalai Lama reveals a theology in which nirvana and the afflictions that oppose it occur simultaneously. From this perspective, sin, not unlike mental afflictions, does not prevent religious consciousness from emerging but keeps it from being fully realized and embodied (what is new is not the purity of consciousness, but the awareness of it).\(^351\) From both perspectives everyone (even sinners and the mentally afflicted) has an experience of what Rahner would call grace and what the Dalai Lama would call natural nirvana. But those who are called saints or bodhisattvas can release

\(^{349}\) See Rahner, \textit{Foundations} 132. Also see Lonergan, “Theology and Man’s Future,” \textit{A Second Collection}, 145.
\(^{350}\) Tenzin Gyatso, \textit{Essence of the Heart Sutra} 127
the power of this religious consciousness and embody it in a charitable or *rupakaya* form for the benefit of others.

**K.3 The Experience of Union with the Absolute**

Rahner and Lonergan describe the experience of grace as an unmediated experience of union with the absolute that transcends the subject-object distinction. Buddhist theologians describe nirvana in a similar manner. John Makransky comments on the experience:

> the bodhisattva’s mind experiences a direct, non-dual realization of suchness. When this realization is perfected at buddhahood, it never ceases. We saw that the permanent cognitive identification of gnosis and suchness, as the essence of buddhahood, is the defining feature of svabhavikakaya. Because suchness is unconditioned, its nondual realization, the svabhavikakaya, constitutes the attainment of the unconditioned state, nirvana.³⁵²

Makransky goes on to say that “the non-dual realization of suchness, then, may be understood to entail an identification with its unconditioned nature.”³⁵³ By ‘suchness,’ Makransky is speaking about the absolute in a Buddhist sense. Both Rahner and Lonergan as well as the mystical tradition of Christianity speak of a conscious identification with the absolute beyond duality. Byrne summarizes the position as follows:

> being-in-love in an unrestricted fashion’ at least suggests to me the image of being undifferentiatedly immersed in love, like a crystal clear vessel immersed in a crystal clear sea. Only subsequently and with great effort are the subtle distinctions worked out between the self who is present to self in unrestricted loving, the unrestricted loving itself, and the One with whom one is in love.³⁵⁴

³⁵² Ibid. 138.
³⁵³ Ibid. 147.
Here Byrne expresses the position of Lonergan and Rahner. While distinctions are made at the level of communication, the experience, as an experience, is prior to the distinction of subject and object.

**K.4 The Experience of Joy**

Rahner’s and Lonergan’s description of religious experience as a state of love seem to parallel the descriptions of certain spiritual traditions of Tantric Buddhism.

The Dalai Lama comments:

> You can speak of the view of emptiness from a subjective, experiential point of view in the context of the Highest Yoga Tantra. For instance in the Geluk tradition an experiential view of emptiness is realized by a state of mind that has experienced the fourth level of joy, which is called spontaneous or coemergent great bliss…Now when we use the term ‘primordial wisdom of great bliss,’ we should realize that great bliss is understood causally, in the sense that you arrive at that deepest level of experience of emptiness through an experience of great bliss…it is through the experience of different levels of joy and bliss that you have arrived at this level of mind.355

The experience of joy as that through which one experiences the fullness of a non-dual identity of mind and emptiness356 might be compared to Lonergan’s description of deep-set joy that both reveals and radiates from the identity of the subject with the absolute and holy mystery.357 These comparisons are meant to be no more than an entry point into a deeper discussion of religious consciousness—a discussion which will require each theologian to move in the direction of a greater degree of descriptive purity.

356 Ibid. 169.
357 In addition to experiences of love and joy, both Rahner and the tradition of Vajrayana Buddhism prioritize the experience of death and dying as an occasion that heightens the experience of divinity. See *Foundations of Christian Faith* 132 and *Gates to Buddhist Practice* 213-226.