

QUAESTIO DISPUTATA
ON THE (ECONOMIC) TRINITY: AN ARGUMENT IN
CONVERSATION WITH ROBERT DORAN

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Following Bernard Lonergan's lead, a systematic-theological account of the human world in relation to God will have a trinitarian "shape," inasmuch as finite, contingent realities participate in the divine relations that constitute the three who are God. While Robert Doran has proposed an excellent beginning of such an account, the author argues that this proposal can be improved, and that as there are three really distinct relations in God, so too there are three ways in which humanity can be, and is being, taken into God's own being.

OF THE MANY THEOLOGICAL LEGACIES for which Western Christianity has Augustine to thank, none has been subjected to more scrutiny and criticism in recent years than the “*ad extra* rule.” The question it applies to is whether all God’s doings “outside” the Trinity are done by the “whole” Trinity all together. According to the rule, they are. Nothing that happens in the created universe happens because of one divine Person rather than another. Respectable theologians, however, have come to think otherwise. The idea that divine threeness is not restricted to God’s inner reality—that the three who are God do engage with the world in distinguishable ways—has been gaining support, the rule notwithstanding. Karl Rahner is no doubt the most influential case in point, though not the first. His well-known axiom identifying the “immanent” with the “economic” Trinity implies that different roles in God’s saving action *ad extra* are played by different Persons. On the Protestant side, Robert Jenson takes a similar stand: “The Augustinian supposition that there is no necessary connection between what differentiates the triune identities in God and the structure of God’s work in time bankrupts the doctrine of the Trinity cognitively, for it detaches language about the triune identities from the

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only thing that made such language meaningful in the first place: the biblical narrative.”¹

There is reason to think that Bernard Lonergan too should be included among those who favor relaxing the *ad extra* rule. His early Latin theology at least points in that direction. But how to follow through systematically on such hints as can be found there becomes a large and complex question once “systematic” theology is defined as he went on to define it in his later *Method in Theology*. It is a question Lonergan himself did not address, and for the most part no one else has addressed it either. Now, however, Robert Doran has outlined a program for a full-blown systematic theology informed throughout by the ways in which the created, historically emergent universe takes part in God precisely as three. His point of reference is a passage in which Lonergan more or less explicitly suspends the *ad extra* rule, to the extent of allowing that the differentiation of the three divine Persons does make a real difference, proximately in human persons and therefore also in the humanly constituted universe. This statement Doran not only accepts; he proposes to elevate it to the status of a theorem and deploy it as the “unified field theory” to which his own projected systematics will add further determinations.

While those determinations have yet to be worked out, the route Doran has chosen to follow holds great promise for anyone who agrees, as I do, with his basic goals and methodological commitments. Nevertheless I am going to argue that it is not the best route. There is a more intelligible alternative to the way he proposes to develop Lonergan’s thinking on God’s trinitarian role in history. While the issues I will raise here are from one point of view small and technical, I do not think them any less important for that. A small misstep at the beginning can disorient a whole journey. Doran envisions a journey that is well worth making, and no one is better equipped than he to make it. All the more reason, then, to examine its point of departure. At the same time, I would emphasize that the questions I will be asking are questions for understanding, not for judgment. They belong to systematics, that is, not to doctrines in Lonergan’s functionally specialized sense. Every answer to such a question necessarily remains hypothetical; it can never put other intelligible hypotheses utterly beyond the pale. That goes for Doran’s answer. It goes for mine as well.

RAISING THE RELEVANT QUESTIONS

The proposals I will consider here are set out in Doran’s book *What Is Systematic Theology?* and more recently and compendiously in an article

¹ Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, *The Triune God* (New York: Oxford University, 1997) 112.

published in this journal.² Their focus is a passage in Lonergan's *De Deo trino* that posits a set of correlations between certain "supernatural entities" within the totality of finite, created beings, and the "real relations" that are identical with God's being.³ Each of these correlations is a distinct, specific participation of the finite in the infinite; together, they articulate the way in which human history is taken into the triune life of God.

Now, whatever these correlations may be in particular, there is an "Augustinian" objection to positing them at all. Only God can take anything into God, and since what is taken is other than God, the taking falls under the *ad extra* rule. To explain it in trinitarian terms is therefore ruled out. God's dealings with the world should be thought of, not as based on divine relations, which distinguish the Persons in God, but as based on the divine nature, which is common to those Persons. If there is such a thing as participation in deity, it cannot be different in different cases; any created reality that does participate in God can participate only in God as unified, not as differentiated.

Such are the lines on which a strict constructionist of the *ad extra* rule might argue. Lonergan's reply is that God is not an agent of the sort that is limited to bringing about only what is similar in kind. No doubt it is the nature of fire always to heat, and of water to moisten; but theirs is not an intellectual nature, whereas God's is. Among the realities that God knows are the divine relations, to which God therefore can, God willing, bring about finite similarity. In brief, there can be exceptions to the *ad extra* rule.

Four such exceptions appear at this point in *De Deo trino*. One of the four results from the fact of the hypostatic union and thus pertains solely to the incarnate Word. This "secondary *esse*" is the act by which Christ's humanity is precisely the humanity assumed by only one of the divine Persons. The second exception pertains to men and women other than Christ, but only in the life to come. It is the eschatological "light of glory" by which we shall know as we are known, in the state of blessedness usually referred to as the beatific vision. Since it is not within the capabilities of any creature—any being that is not itself God—either to know the essence of God or to be the humanity of someone who is God, both of these realities,

² Robert M. Doran, *What Is Systematic Theology?* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2005); "The Starting Point of Systematic Theology," *Theological Studies* 67 (2006) 750–76.

³ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *De Deo trino*, vol. 2, *Pars systematica* (Rome: Gregorian University, 1964) 234–35; quoted (in English) in Doran, "Starting Point" 752–53 and Doran, *What Is Systematic Theology?* 18. More recently, the whole volume has been published in dual-language format: Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 12 [hereafter, CWBL], ed. Robert M. Doran and H. Daniel Monsour, trans. Michael Shields (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2007). For the passage in question see 471, 473.

though created and finite, are utterly supernatural. The same is true of “sanctifying grace” and the “habit of charity,” which are the other two participations that Lonergan singles out as exceptions to the *ad extra* rule. These last two are the focus of the middle section of my discussion. Before considering them in detail, however, I will make two observations about the passage in *De Deo trino* in which they appear—the “four-point hypothesis,” as Doran calls it. These observations will lead to the question about his own proposal that I think is most in need of asking.

My first observation is that Doran is putting all his eggs in the basket of a *hapax legomenon*. This is not to say that Lonergan never coupled the “immanent” Trinity with created beings elsewhere in his work. On the contrary, there are several such couplings, especially in the Latin textbooks. But nowhere else are the finite *supernaturalia* four. They are always three, and always the same three. A good example, available in English, sets these three in the context of the First Vatican Council’s characterization of theology as an endeavor to relate revealed mysteries to each other and to humankind’s last end.⁴ This end, Lonergan observes, is given in the beatific vision; elevation to it is justification; both these revealed mysteries have their cause and source in another, namely, the hypostatic union. Thus “one can distinguish this remarkable similarity in these three instances, namely, that in them not only is God’s infinite perfection united to creatures, but also this very union involves the existence of an appropriate created contingent term.”⁵ One such term, the light of glory, belongs to the beatific vision, in addition to the divine essence. Another, the secondary *esse* of the Word, belongs to the hypostatic union, in addition to the Word’s infinite act of existence. A third belongs to the justification of sinners, in addition to the uncreated gift that is the Holy Spirit. This third contingent term is sanctifying grace. There is no fourth. The habit of charity, included though it is in the list that Doran draws on, is not referred to here at all. Nor does it appear in a closely parallel passage in another of Lonergan’s Latin treatises,⁶ nor in three further references that the same treatise makes, in different contexts, to the same triad—light of glory and beatific vision, secondary *esse* and hypostatic union, sanctifying grace and gift of the

⁴ *Dei Filius* no. 4, a text to which Lonergan frequently made hopeful reference. See Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum, definitionum, et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, rev., exp., annot. Adolf Schönmetzer (Barcelona: Herder, 1976) no. 3016.

⁵ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, CWBL 7, trans. Michael Shields (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2002) 155; translated from, *De constitutione Christi: Ontologica et psychologica*, 4th ed. (Rome: Gregorian University, 1964).

⁶ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *De Verbo incarnato*, 3rd ed. (Rome: Gregorian University, 1964) 335.

Spirit.⁷ To the best of my knowledge, it is only the list in *De Deo trino* that adds habitual charity to what Lonergan otherwise thought of consistently as a threefold communication of divinity to creatures.

My second observation about the “four-point” passage complements the first. If this solitary fourfold correlation is odd on the side of the contingent, created realities, it is odd too on the side of the infinite, divine realities with which they are correlated, namely the “real relations” in God. Here too, though for a different reason, the oddness has to do with number. For present purposes there is no need to question the reasoning by which Lonergan concludes that there are real relations in God and that they are four. It is a conclusion that plays an essential part in the larger project of constructing a systematic conception of the divine Persons on the basis of a psychological analogy. That being said, it is also true that the four real relations occupy a kind of conceptual halfway-house. It is equally essential to show that, of the four, only three are really distinct, since it is with these three that the divine Persons are identical. In other words, the Persons can be conceived as three precisely because three relations, only, are distinct. Stated sequentially, Lonergan’s construction begins with the revealed fact of two divine processions, each of which grounds two relations; from there it moves, by way of the three such relations that are really distinct, to a conception of three Persons as differently constituted. Not only, then, do divine relations occupy an intermediate stage, methodologically speaking, but also, before the next stage can be reached, one of these relations has to be disqualified, so to speak, by arguing that it is continuous with and subsumed in the others.⁸ This “extra” relation does not constitute a divine Person. Still less has it been sent to the human race, as divine Persons have been sent in the incarnation of the Word and the gift of the Spirit. One would hardly suppose this relation had any part to play in the divine “economy,” especially since Lonergan devotes several pages in *De Deo trino* to expounding the idea that the Son and the Spirit have been sent on purpose to establish and confirm *interpersonal* relations. So it is odd to find the “four-point” passage assigning an “economic” role not only to each of the three divine relations that are severally identical with the Persons of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, but to the indistinct, subsumed, “extra”

⁷ Lonergan, *De Verbo incarnato* 254, 323, 566.

⁸ See Lonergan, *Triune God* 247–55 (*De Deo trino* 123–127). The argument here, as elsewhere, parallels Aquinas’s; see *Summa theologiae* 1, q. 30, a. 2. Real relations are distinct only if there is mutual opposition, and in the case of the relation that Aquinas calls “spiration” and Lonergan calls “active spiration,” there is not. The reason *why* there is not lies in the *taxis* or sequence of the divine relations, which Lonergan transposes into a psychological key; see *Triune God* 251, 253 (*De Deo trino* 125). By comparison, Aquinas’s argument for subsuming spiration (q. 30, a. 2, reply obj. 1) seems unconvincingly abrupt.

relation as well, although it is a relation known to exist only by theological reasoning and is personal neither in the analogical sense that applies to God nor in any other sense.

The drift of my comments so far is probably evident. The most that *De Deo trino* has to say in commendation of the “four-point hypothesis” is that to adopt it would not be unsuitable.⁹ Might there be a *more* suitable point of reference for understanding how history enters into the triune God? On the one hand, when Lonergan speaks of the mysteries in which deity and humanity are joined, he speaks of three and—with one exception—three only. On the other hand, God is not a quaternity, so far as we know; and if it is true that there are four real relations in God, it is also true that only in thought is one of them distinguishable. From either side of a correspondence between divine and human realities, it might well seem that what systematic theology is called upon to work out is not a four-point but a three-point hypothesis.

That is what the final section of my article proposes. At the moment it is just an idea. There is a certain *prima facie* plausibility about a correlation with three on one side and three on the other. But triplicity as such does not guarantee anything—Augustine was right on that score. Nor should the “four-point” passage be dismissed altogether just because Lonergan never said the same thing again. Constructing a systematic-theological hypothesis is not a matter of quoting or even interpreting authorities. At least it should not be. The criterion, as Doran would agree, must finally be methodological. Lonergan’s Latin theology, however dated and sometimes jejune it may be on the whole, is undoubtedly a quarry from which there are permanently valid insights to be mined; but the warrant of their validity is that they can be transposed into a framework of terms and relations reciprocally defined and derived from an analysis of conscious intentionality. To the extent that the “four-point hypothesis” can be so transposed, it deserves to be taken seriously. But that extent may not be as great as Doran hopes. I think it is not.

My reasons for so thinking can best be explained beginning from the side of the created yet supernatural entities through which human being is assimilated to God as three. Of the four such entities named in the passage Doran proposes to build on, I argue that two are really the same. The distinction between “sanctifying grace” and “habitual charity” is not a distinction that a methodologically grounded theology has any reason to affirm. This is not, of course, an unprecedented position. Whether the habit of charity is to be identified with sanctifying grace has been a disputed question before now, and Lonergan’s estimate of its importance is worth

⁹ Lonergan, *Triune God* 472–73 (*De Deo trino* 235): “sine inconvenientia diceretur” (it would not be inappropriate . . . to say).

mentioning here. It is not, he said, a question to which the answer affects the heart of the matter—only the way it is explained. “Different theologians set forth different intelligible organizations of the material.”¹⁰ My thesis is that if Lonergan had himself reconsidered the “four-point hypothesis” in the light of his later *Method in Theology*, he would have found a three-point hypothesis to be a more intelligible organization of the material relevant to the deification of history.

My argument has three components. The first is that the methodological basis on which sanctifying grace was originally distinguished from charity does not lend itself to being updated. The second is that Lonergan evidently found no reason to draw an equivalent distinction in his later works. The third is that there do not appear to be any experiential data that would confirm such a distinction, drawn in the way Doran draws it.

A DISTINCTION REVISITED

The first relevant question is what Lonergan meant by the terms “sanctifying grace” and “habit of charity” when he was writing the passage that Doran relies on. Here a fairly definite answer is possible. Lonergan undoubtedly distinguished between these two in his earlier writings. To understand *why* he did, it is necessary to go back as far as his doctoral dissertation, and to race through some old-fashioned metaphysical theology. Let me assure the reader that this will be no detour.

The key is the discovery, as Lonergan regarded it, of the “theorem of the supernatural” in the 13th century. With that discovery, theology entered the realm of theoretical discourse and began to be a science. What was discovered was not that supernatural realities exist in the Christian dispensation; that was taken for granted. It was rather that these realities constitute an order, a constellation as it were, within which their relations are isomorphic with those found in the natural world. Between the supernatural and the natural, in other words, there is a structural analogy. Lonergan credits Philip the Chancellor with discovering this mental perspective, and it was Philip who inaugurated the distinction that is relevant here. The analogy he drew was this: as the *soul* stands, in the natural order, to *will* and *intellect*, of which it is the principle, so *grace* stands, in the supernatural order, to *charity* and *faith*. Broadly speaking, then, what distinguishes charity from grace, both of which are supernatural, is what distinguishes will from soul.¹¹

¹⁰ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *De ente supernaturali: Supplementum schematicum* (unpublished, 1946) section 14. On this work, see J. Michael Stebbins, *The Divine Initiative: Grace, World-Order, and Human Freedom in the Early Writings of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1995) 301 n. 1.

¹¹ See Stebbins, *Divine Initiative* 78–83, and esp. 81.

It was this analogy that Lonergan elaborated in his early theology, taking into account the refinement of metaphysical categories that occurred after Philip's time. Stated briefly and schematically, the relevant order as he then conceived it comprises (*A*) substance, (*B*) accidental or passive potency, and (*C*) operation. In the case of human acts, potency (*B*) is further divided into operative faculties (*B1*), such as will and intellect, and habits (*B2*), which may, though they do not necessarily, inform those faculties. While it is always through its faculties (*B1*) that the human soul (*A*) receives or elicits operations (*C*), in general the operations may or may not occur habitually (*B2*).

Such is the natural order. In the supernatural order the relevant operations, for present purposes, are those by which deity is attained as it is in itself. There are two of these operations: in this life, the act of charity; in the life to come, the act of "seeing" God. Both of them are finite; both are created; yet inasmuch as they attain God *as* God, they are unrestricted in a way that would be incongruous for any finite being. Granted that they do occur, they must somehow be possible, and the condition of their possibility must be that the subject whose acts they are has itself been enhanced, raised to a state beyond or above its own finitude, without ceasing to be finite. This raising is the operation of grace, which in justification not only heals the soul but elevates it to the supernatural order.

So conceived, grace is an "entitative" habit, defined as a habit that modifies the essence of the soul. The modification, in this case, supplies an explanatory viewpoint for understanding how loving and knowing God can occur with no disparity between subject and act. However—and this is the crucial point—acts of charity and vision have a further condition. Their occurrence requires the elevation not only of the soul itself (*A*), but of its essential potencies (*B1*) as well. That is, it requires the infusion of "operative" habits (*B2*): the habit of charity, in the will, and the light of glory, in the intellect. To say that this condition must be met is the same as to say that acts of charity and acts of vision do not occur otherwise than habitually. Some supernatural acts, notably acts of faith and hope, may be either transient or habitual. Charity, on the other hand, "faileth not," and neither does the beatific vision. That they do not is accounted for by positing the gift of correspondingly supernatural habits.

What is important to note here is that this analysis makes every act of charity contingent upon two elevations.¹² Not one habit but two, different

¹² Stebbins (*ibid.* 216) points out that even in its own metaphysical context this double elevation raises questions—chiefly with respect to conceiving "obediential potency"—that Lonergan, if he recognized them, failed to answer. I am following Stebbins's interpretation, which makes the best of what on the face of it is a striking inconsistency.

in kind, both supernatural, must be present—the first, because acts of charity occur only in the justified; the second, because they occur spontaneously but not sporadically. To put this requirement in terms of the naturally known analogy, an act of charity (*C*) depends *proximately* on habitual charity (*B2*), an *operative* habit in the will (*BI*), and at the same time depends *remotely* on sanctifying grace, an *entitative* habit that modifies substantial form, namely the soul (*A*). And the point to be gathered is that the basis on which a distinction can be drawn, analogically, between grace and charity stands pretty much where Philip the Chancellor left it—in the difference between the soul itself and its several potencies.

I have rehearsed this bit of increasingly unfamiliar metaphysical theology for the sake of showing how the “early” Lonergan conceived sanctifying grace and the habit of charity and how they differ, when he numbered both of them among the supernatural entities in the “four-point hypothesis.” The next question is whether this conception is one of the “permanently valid chunks”¹³ of his Latin theology. To judge by *Method in Theology*, the answer is very probably, if not certainly, *no*.

With respect to the Scholastic tradition, Lonergan’s later writings advocate “transposition” rather than wholesale abandonment. *Method* illustrates what he had in mind by sketching a before-and-after comparison.¹⁴ Significantly, the theological locus of the sketch is grace. On the “before” side, the “theoretical theology” of grace that Lonergan presents is none other than the one he had made his own in earlier writings. As I have just outlined, it “presupposed a metaphysical psychology in terms of the essence of the soul, its potencies, habits, and acts.” On the “after” side the sketch indicates categories that a methodical theology would use instead. Only one of the older terms, “acts,” remains once the transposition has been effected. All the others disappear, for a reason that is not far to seek. While it is from acts that a methodical theology will, in the first instance, derive its terms and relations, the acts it derives them from are the conscious acts of the conscious, concrete subject. The derivation, that is to say, has an experiential basis. But the study of the conscious subject, which articulates that basis, “prescinds from the soul, its essence, its potencies, its habits, for *none of these* is given in consciousness.”¹⁵ Conscious acts, precisely as conscious, survive the transition to a methodical theology of grace. The potencies and the essence of the soul do not.

Lonergan’s reason for setting the older terms aside is worth emphasizing

¹³ The description is Lonergan’s; see his assessment of the Latin treatises in *A Second Collection* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974) 211–13, at 210.

¹⁴ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972) 289.

¹⁵ Lonergan, *Second Collection* 73, emphasis added.

in that it bears on what seems to be the logic of Doran's proposal. The "four-point hypothesis invites us," as he puts it, "to continue to distinguish sanctifying grace from the habit of charity."¹⁶ Quite so. But unless we are sure the hypothesis is tenable, we might do well to decline the invitation. One consideration that weighs against its tenability is how the distinction it invites us to go on drawing came to be drawn in the first place. As I hope I have shown, it was drawn in a metaphysical context of distinctions between remote and proximate passive potency, between entitative and operative habits, between the soul and its faculties. But if "none of these is given in consciousness," the analogue in the natural order for distinguishing between two supernatural entities is at least called into question, so far as a methodical theology is concerned.

Still, even if the distinction that Doran would preserve depends on an analogy framed in terms that should be abandoned on methodological grounds, it might nevertheless be possible to preserve it by drawing a functionally equivalent distinction, in the "transposed" terms appropriate to a methodical theology. There is no evidence, however, that Lonergan drew any such distinction in his later work. Nor, more importantly, do the "transposed" terms appropriate to a methodical theology, defined as he defines them in *Method*, lend themselves to drawing it. For one thing, "habit" as such has no place among those terms, and it would appear to be excluded for reasons I have alluded to. A habit is a metaphysical entity, a form, inferred from the regular recurrence of acts. The acts, in this case, are conscious; by those acts, their subject is conscious; inferring a habit is itself a conscious act, but that which is inferred is not. At the same time, however, one of the terms Lonergan does include—indeed, the central term—is "dynamic state," which he says *is* conscious and which he characterizes as a "habitual actuation" of the human capacity for self-transcendence.¹⁷ Perhaps, then, such a conscious state, which seems to be neither a subject nor an act, as such, can be thought of as taking on at least part of the role that older theology assigned to habit. On that assumption, it would be possible to ask how far, if at all, the dynamic state in question might represent a transposition of an "entitative" or alternatively an "operative" habit.

On the one hand, self-transcendence refers to a concrete, existential subject surpassing one and the same subject. As affecting and effecting the subject's being in its entirety, habitual self-transcendence might be thought of as in some sense "entitative." On the other hand, connotations of an "operative" habit are evident too, inasmuch as this dynamic state is, more specifically, a state of being in love. As such, it is identified with charity in

¹⁶ Doran, "Starting Point" 772.

¹⁷ Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 283.

the 1 Corinthians sense, that is, with one of the theological virtues, traditionally conceived as operative habits. As love, it is conceived by extrapolation from other love—familial, patriotic, humanitarian—and, like other love, it is a principle from which proceed inner and outer acts, decisions and deeds, in much the same way that older theologians held such acts to proceed from operative habits. Taking all this into account, it would perhaps be consonant with Lonergan's own statements to say that the one conscious state he refers to functions both quasi-entitatively, transforming the conscious subject, and quasi-operatively, reorienting the conscious acts of deciding by which the subject is self-constituted. Some such interpretation would preserve the old language and something of its old sense. It would not, however, preserve the old distinction. Rather, it would amount to an alternative—and seriously misleading—way of referring to unrestricted love as at once a dynamic state and a principle. In other words, it would be a restatement of the fact that sanctifying grace is at once operative and cooperative.¹⁸

It seems clear that Lonergan himself saw no reason to distinguish between an “entitative habit” of sanctifying grace and an “operative habit” of charity, once he had moved away from the faculty psychology on which such a distinction rests. Still, *Method in Theology* is methodology primarily, and theology only by way of illustrating method. It will not do to put too much weight on the sketch of a transposed theology of grace that I have been referring to. There might be specifically theological reasons for reintroducing the distinction that Doran finds himself invited by the “four-point hypothesis” to draw.

Such reasons, he believes, are to be found in one of Lonergan's latest essays. Although it is an essay on christological method, it includes a very condensed summary of trinitarian theology, beginning with an analogy for the divine processions.¹⁹ As Doran interprets it, the analogy is new—a

¹⁸ Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 107. Such a formulation is apt to mislead because “operative” can have two senses, and because grace can be divided, from one point of view, into operative and cooperative, while from another it can be divided into habitual and actual. The result is that sanctifying grace, considered as habitual, is an *entitative* habit; but, like actual grace, it is *operative* as well as cooperative.

¹⁹ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, “Christology Today: Methodological Reflections,” in *A Third Collection* (New York: Paulist, 1985) 74–99. The passage Doran finds significant (93) he quotes at length in “Starting Point” 768. Lonergan's own reason for including it at all should be mentioned. In the hypostatic union there is one subject of two consciousnesses. Since that subject is the divine subject who is the Word, Christology has to “speak intelligibly of three distinct and conscious subjects of divine consciousness.” That is, it has to draw on a fully worked-out trinitarian theology, of which Lonergan accordingly provides an outline.

“supernatural” analogy, rather than a transposition or development of the “natural” analogy on which Lonergan had built the vast edifice of *De Deo trino*. This reading of the little five-line summary is, I think, a misapprehension. The “new” analogy, however, as Doran takes it to be, plays almost as important a part in his proposal as does the “four-point hypothesis.” Accordingly, I need to specify my misgivings.

It is true that the summary in question differs, at least verbally, from Lonergan’s other trinitarian writings. The difference lies chiefly in the way deity is conceived. Instead of rational consciousness, as Lonergan would have put it before he wrote *Method*,²⁰ the analogue for divine being is said to be “that higher synthesis of intellectual, rational, and moral consciousness that is the dynamic state of being in love.” The difference, however, although it is significant, is not so great as it might seem. For Lonergan, love and reasonableness are never opposed. In his early writings, on the contrary, rational consciousness is at once intellectual and moral, so that loving, properly so called, consists in willing a rationally apprehended good. Doran, however, is persuaded that the later analogy stands at yet a further remove from the older one, because when Lonergan wrote “dynamic state of being in love” he meant being in love *without restriction*. Granted such a supernatural starting point, it must be the case that the rest of the argument unfolds entirely on the “supernatural” plane. Doran is further persuaded that this new analogy moves “from above downward,” whereas in *De Deo trino*’s “natural” analogy the direction is “from below upward.”²¹ Both these persuasions are puzzling.

As to the first point: love need not be unrestricted in order to furnish an analogy on which the reasoning Lonergan summarizes can build. Any lover, in virtue of being in love, recognizes the evidence that something or someone is worth deciding for. Just so, analogously speaking, does God recognize the value of divine goodness. Again, in any lover, grasping that this evidence is sufficient cannot but give rise to affirming that the lovable, whatever it is, ought to be loved; and the lover’s affirmation, inasmuch as it is sincere, cannot but issue in a decision such that what is known to be lovable, and thus *ought* to be loved, *is* loved. Just so, analogously speaking, do an affirming word and a loving choice come forth or “proceed” in God. “Such is the analogy,” Lonergan says, “found in the creature.” If he meant “the creature supernaturally elevated,” he never said so.²²

²⁰ For example (in English), Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, CWBL 10 (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1993) 68 n. 57.

²¹ Doran, “Starting Point” 759–60.

²² Lonergan, *A Third Collection* 93. The fact that Lonergan explicitly refers to *De Deo trino* for the further steps to be taken in building on this analogy (99 n. 45) hardly suggests that it is supernatural, or even all that new; quite the reverse.

As to the second point: the “upward” or “downward” trajectory of this sequence, conceived metaphorically in terms of sequential levels of conscious intending, would seem to be a red herring. If there has to be a spatial image, what happens in a lover who is consciously loving happens “horizontally,” that is, at the same level of consciousness. It is true that, granted a faculty psychology, judgment or affirmation is an act of the intellect, and decision an act of the will. But levels of consciousness are not faculties. Whether the levels are three, as in *Insight*, or four, as in *Method in Theology*, affirmations of value and the decisions they “spirate” both occur at the highest level, the level of “rational self-consciousness” or the “existential” level, as the case may be. Either way, the elements of the analogy—grasping, affirming, deciding—are the same, and so is their intelligible order.

And it is these elements, in their order, that everything else depends on. The psychological analogy presupposes two rules of theological grammar. On the one hand, the three who are God do not differ absolutely; that is Athanasius’s rule for construing “consubstantial.” Nor, on the other hand, do they differ because of anything else; that would mean they are finite. They differ only with respect to each other, and the doctrinal reason for the difference is that the Son and the Spirit, each of whom “proceeds,” proceed in different ways. It is these two proceedings that the theological tradition in which Lonergan stands endeavors to conceive as analogous to psychological fact—the fact that the act of judging or affirming proceeds from a grasp of sufficient evidence, and the fact that commitment, the act of deciding for, then proceeds as originated loving from judgment expressing what is grasped. There are other psychological processions, any number of them, that are analogous in one way or another to the generation of the Son and the breathing-out or spiration of the Spirit. Lonergan builds on the two that are best qualified for the task, in that each is among other things a procession *of act from act*.²³

Now Doran, if I have understood his proposal, believes that the whole set of terms and relations—grasp of evidence, judgment, commitment—is reduplicated in the consciousness of those who are religiously converted. What is “given in consciousness,” in the case of religious people, affords not only the analogy I have just mentioned, the natural analogy that Lonergan builds on in *De Deo trino*, but also a further, parallel, *analogous* analogy that is supernatural.²⁴ In this respect it would seem that Doran is

²³ A procession from *potency* to act—the occurrence of insight, the act of understanding, for example—would be less well qualified to serve as an analogue because in God there is no potency.

²⁴ Doran recognizes that he is proposing to adopt, as analogous to God’s Trinity, realities that are *themselves* known only by analogy with “natural” realities (“Start-

offering a refinement of the argument he advanced in earlier publications, to the effect that a systematic understanding of grace requires positing a level of conscious operations beyond the four levels that Lonergan acknowledges in *Method in Theology*.²⁵ In any case, the reduplication Doran now proposes would imply that in specifically religious consciousness two distinct acts occur: an act of supernatural judging that proceeds from unrestricted love, and an act of supernatural deciding that proceeds from both acts. If this implication is verifiable—if these acts do occur—then there is a relevant trinitarian analogy, hitherto unnoticed. Otherwise there is not. Doran, however, wants to be able to say something rather different. Unrestricted love, as he thinks of it, is *itself* a grasp of evidence, indeed a *habitual* grasp. With this he merges habitual affirmation. From the merger flows “the habitual *state* of originated loving . . . that we call the habit of charity.”²⁶ Somehow, two processions of act from act have become the emergence of one state from another.

As a trinitarian analogy, this proposal leaves something to be desired. But then, it is not with an understanding of the “immanent” Trinity that Doran is primarily concerned. His aim is rather to expound, in terms appropriate to a methodical rather than a theoretical theology, a trinitarian “economy” that is constituted not by created realities *as* created, but by supernatural realities, namely, those set out in the “four-point hypothesis.” That hypothesis stipulates that two such realities, no more, no fewer, can be expected to characterize religious consciousness here and now. One of the four is sanctifying grace, which for Doran, following Lonergan, is to be transposed as the state of unrestricted loving. If the “four-point hypothesis” is more than speculative, another of the realities it posits should correspond somehow to the habit of charity. This correspondence Doran believes he has found, incipiently at least, in Lonergan’s “new” summary of the psychological analogy. Before it can be found, however, that analogy has to be promoted to supernatural status and then modified in a way that

ing Point” 767). Methodologically speaking, this is a notable innovation. Epistemologically speaking, it seems to recommend explaining the mysterious by the mysterious, if not *obscurum per obscurum*.

²⁵ See Robert M. Doran, “Consciousness and Grace,” *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 11 (1991) 51–75, at 54. As stated there and in his magisterial *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1990), Doran’s position is subjected to a careful, courteous, and (in my judgment) convincing critique in Michael Vertin, “Lonergan on Consciousness: Is There a Fifth Level?” *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 12 (1994) 1–36. Vertin’s arguments with respect to the central issue (26–28) bear, *mutatis mutandis*, on the present discussion, from a phenomenological rather than a systematic-theological standpoint.

²⁶ Doran, “Starting Point” 772, emphasis added.

appears to undercut the relevance to trinitarian theology it had in the first place.

I have been suggesting arguments to the effect that, in certain important respects, the “starting point of systematic theology” that Doran proposes to adopt is a point somewhat distant from Lonergan’s position. On the one hand, I am not convinced that the half-dozen lines of *De Deo trino* that underpin Doran’s project can be made, just as they stand, to bear the weight of what he aims to build. On the other hand, I am not convinced that Lonergan ever entertained a trinitarian analogy substantially different from the one it took him the whole of *De Deo trino* to expound. Thus my arguments have been mostly “intertextual.” They do not address a further question, of a different kind, that certainly ought to be raised and that, in the long run, is perhaps more decisive. Lonergan was not afraid to appeal to experience in order to determine which of two readings of Aquinas he would follow.²⁷ The same principle should at some point be invoked in respect of the question at hand. *Is* there, then, in point of fact, a reality that is “given in consciousness,” a reality distinguishable from the transformation that is being in love without restriction, yet also a reality such as to deserve the name of charity?

Doran believes there is. On *what* it is, however, he has not much to say. It will be found to consist, he says, in “self-transcending schemes of recurrence.”²⁸ Possibly his forthcoming systematics will specify these. Meanwhile, it would seem that, no matter what they are in particular, a general objection will have to be met. I have mentioned that “habitual actuation of man’s capacity for self-transcendence” is Lonergan’s definition of being unrestrictedly in love, that is, of sanctifying grace. What would a further “habit of charity” add to this actuation? Love as a state of becoming is certainly the principle of loving acts, and in so far as the love is intelligent, reasonable, and responsible these acts will effect their subject’s self-transcendence. The same is true, all the more, of unrestricted love. Such acts may recur as elements of intelligible patterns, which is to say that they may become habitual. Now by reason of the supernatural love that is their principle, such habitual or recurrent schemes could perhaps be regarded as meritorious, to use the language of an older theology. But even so, that would not make them absolutely supernatural in their own right, as the “four-point hypothesis” requires. In fact, what I have just sketched once again is, as Doran acknowledges, the difference between grace as operative

²⁷ See Lonergan, *Triune God* 221 (*De Deo trino* 111) on the question whether love *produces* or *constitutes* the presence of the beloved in the lover. Each alternative has texts from Aquinas to support it. Lonergan opts for the latter, on experiential grounds.

²⁸ Doran, “Starting Point” 762, 763.

and as cooperative—not the difference between sanctifying grace and another, “infused” habit.

THREEFOLD ASSIMILATION TO THE THREEFOLD GOD

As I noted at the outset, systematic theology cannot claim to do more than set out possibly relevant hypotheses that shed explanatory light on mystery. In the present case two mysteries are involved: participation in the divine nature, and the trinity of Persons whose nature it is. My argument has been that the first of these is better understood if sanctifying grace, conceived as unrestricted love, is identified with what older theology distinguished as the habit of charity. Accepting this identification would lead to a systematic-theological hypothesis somewhat different from the one Doran favors. But it would be a hypothesis that preserves what is most significant about the original version, which is Lonergan’s specific way of differentiating the assimilation of created beings to the triune God.

The trinitarian “economy” that is consonant with the kind of exceptions to the *ad extra* rule that Lonergan proposed is not a narrative. In particular, creation is not episode one, as theologians who abandon the rule completely are wont to imagine. Creation does come under the rule, and there is one Creator: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Every created being, therefore, is “already” related to God in virtue of being created. That is what being created *is*—not an event but a relation, and more exactly a relation of dependence. What Lonergan proposes in *De Deo trino* is that certain created beings are *also* related to God as *God* is related to God. That is what supernatural being is—assimilation to divine being as relational and, more exactly, assimilation to relations that are themselves identical with divine being. That, I take it, is Lonergan’s significant and original contribution to trinitarian theology. To the extent that Doran is going to expound it I have no reservations about his project. The only questions I have raised ask *which* created realities can most appropriately be thought of as sharing in divine relations, and *which* divine relations they share in. Having taken the position that there is no real difference between two of the relevant created realities that Doran feels bound to distinguish, I ought at least to indicate how a different, “three-point” hypothesis would nevertheless incorporate what he would presumably agree is the permanently valid feature of the original version.

The three created realities, then, would be found where Lonergan most usually found them: vision, in the blessed; personal union, in Christ; and sanctifying grace, in those who are being loved into loving God. The corresponding relations *in* God, I would suggest, are the three that constitute the Persons of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Those relations are “paternity,” “filiation,” and “passive spiration” respectively, to use their

Scholastic names. What ought to be shown is that there are intelligible reasons for lining up these sets of three, item by item. In order to show that there are such reasons, however, something more needs to be said about divine relations as conceived on the psychological analogy.

The two processions in God, as I have mentioned, are best conceived as analogous to (1) the conscious emergence of affirmative judgment, an emergence that is from, and because of, the act of recognizing and grasping the sufficiency of evidence for goodness or value; and (2) the conscious emergence of benevolent commitment to that value, an emergence that is from, and because of, judgment that expresses what is recognized and grasped. Of the four relations established by these emergings, three can be conceived as really distinct from each other. They are (a) a relation of obligation or moral necessity, in that value cannot but be affirmed once the evidence for it is grasped; (b) the dependence of affirmation upon its origin, which is a grasp of evidence; and (c) the dependence of commitment to acknowledged value upon the grasping and the affirming that acknowledge it. All three of these relations are conscious and all three belong to the conscious state of being in love that is deity, analogically conceived. As conscious, each relation makes its subject self-present. Because each is eternal and eternally distinct, there are three subjects of divine consciousness. These three conscious subjects differ only with respect to each other, only in the way each is in love, because each of them *is* a relation. Thus the Father is God in the way that recognizing what makes goodness lovable gives rise to an exigence for affirming that the good is lovable and ought to be loved. The Son is God in the way that true affirmation depends on such a recognition. The Spirit is God in the way that commitment to what is truly lovable depends on acknowledging, in a judgment grounded on evidence, its lovableness.²⁹

Such is the “immanent” threeness of deity. Turning to the created beings that have the best claim to be regarded as supernatural, there is in the first place the contingent fact of the Incarnation. One of the subjects of divine consciousness, God the Son, has become the subject of a human consciousness as well. As a consequence of this union, all that was human in the man Jesus Christ stood and stands in a special, indeed a unique, relation to the Son. This concrete, individual “humanity” was and is his alone. Its being is being-assumed by the Son only, and as such it participates in the divine relation that is a relation to the Son, that is, in “paternity.”³⁰ Then, second,

²⁹ On the formulations I have used here, see Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958–1964*, CWBL 6, ed. Robert C. Croken, Frederick E. Crowe, and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1996) 135.

³⁰ It is not the assumed humanity of Christ itself, as Doran has it (“Starting Point” 765), that is the appropriate, contingent, external term here. Christ’s hu-

there is the contingent, eschatological fact of the beatific “vision of God,” in which the blessed know as they are known. But to know, in the complete and proper sense, is to have arrived at true judgment. Thus, what is known to God is known “in the Word,” in the uttered expression that the Father eternally utters. To know as God knows, then, would be to participate in the divine relation that is a relation to the Father, that is, in “filiation.” This eschatological homecoming can be thought of as bringing to fulfillment the transition from “being in Christ as substance,” ontologically, that is, but not reflectively or knowingly, to “being in Christ as subject.”³¹

The two correspondences I have outlined are not significantly different from the same two as set out in the original version of Lonergan’s correlation. The third, on my hypothesis, does differ. On the side of created reality, there is what older theology called sanctifying grace, the *ad extra* term that is the consequence of the contingent fact that the Holy Spirit is given. Described in keeping with the transition to a methodical theology, it is the conscious state of unrestricted love. Now love is the presence of the beloved in the lover. Loving without restriction, the presence of God as beloved, is loving God *as* God and loving as God loves. But in God it is through the Spirit, through proceeding, “spirated” Love, that the Father and the Son love themselves and other selves as well. To love God as the Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father would be to participate in the divine relation that is a relation to the Father and the Son, that is, in “passive spiration.”³²

This “three-point hypothesis,” in sum, posits a being related to God the Son, by participation that is unique to the incarnate Word. It posits a being related to God the Father, by participation that is eschatological. And it posits a being related to the Father and the Son, by participation that is the created counterpart of the uncreated gift of the Spirit. This last is the one reality that, in the present life of men and women other than Jesus Christ, is absolutely supernatural.³³ That is not to say there are no other supernatural acts or states at all; there are. But their being supernatural derives in some fashion from the state of unrestricted love. The most important case in point is the knowing that is grounded in, or “born” of, that love—

manity is a created being, like ours apart from sin, and as such its reality comes under the *ad extra* rule. What is supernatural is the fact of its being the humanity of a divine Person. See Lonergan, *Constitution of Christ* 139–51, esp. 141, 147.

³¹ See Lonergan, *Collection*, CWBL 4, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1988) 230–31.

³² Note that this relation is a relation of origin, not a relation to the object of love. The sense in which the Father and the Son love each other through the Spirit is the sense in which a tree blooms through its blossoms. See Lonergan, *Triune God* 357 (*De Deo trino* 176).

³³ For qualifications of this statement, see Stebbins, *Divine Initiative* 120–22.

the knowing that is faith, as Lonergan defines it.³⁴ By itself, his definition is open to more than one interpretation, and it cannot be said that his various efforts at spelling out its meaning are unambiguous. His main point, however, is clear enough. Love, all love, is, among other things, an apprehension of value. Now a value, as apprehended, is something that can be chosen. The “transcendent” value that unrestricted, religious love apprehends, according to *Method in Theology*, is the value of responding to that mysterious love by choosing to love in return. “Such is the basic option of the existential subject once called by God.”³⁵

To opt, however, presupposes that the value opted for has been objectified, however nebulously. Thus it would follow that while unrestricted love is nonintentional, the faith it gives rise to is not. Faith has an object, mediated by linguistic or symbolic or incarnate meaning, as the case may be. Born though it is of an “inner word” of invitation, of love as bestowed, faith requires the complement of an “outer word” that is an avowal of love. For to cooperate with the love that God gives, to love in return, creatures such as we are must in some sense know what they are doing and for whose sake they are doing it. Such, I think, would be the lines along which a systematic theology that looks to Lonergan for guidance would relate the mission of the divine Word, whose incarnation inaugurated the specifically Christian “outer word,” to the mission of the Spirit. And such, I think, would consequently be the basic moment in the trinitification of the world.³⁶

³⁴ Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 115.

³⁵ Ibid. 116.

³⁶ Theology is conversation, and for voicing their judgments on this article *in fieri* I am grateful to Brian Flanagan, Frederick Lawrence, Michael Stebbins, and Michael Vertin.