

**HEARING THE CALL OF GOD:  
TOWARD A THEOLOGICAL PHENOMENOLOGY OF VOCATION**

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### **Statement of Sources**

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

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## Abstract

This study contributes to the development of a theological phenomenology of vocation. In so doing, it posits that the distressing condition of existential unrest can be a foundational motivation for the vocational search and argues that the discovery of one's vocation, which necessarily entails an engagement with existential mystery, is served by attentiveness to what is termed the "pneumo-somatic" data of embodied consciousness. Hence, the study does not canvass the broad range of phenomena that would contribute to a comprehensive phenomenology of vocation. Rather, it seeks to highlight an aspect frequently overlooked in the vocational search, namely the value of attentiveness to one's experience of the body in the context of prayerful engagement with the mystery of God.

The questions addressed by the study arose from my experience of working at the interface of psychology and spirituality. People who have been subjected to extreme suffering frequently find that their usual modes of self-experience and of relating to the world have been stripped away. They experience agitation and restlessness. They are exposed to a mysterious and disturbing void at the core of their being and a profound existential self-question arises from that experience. Existential concerns have been addressed throughout the ages, engaging as they do both an interior experience of mystery and an ensuing self-question. Hans Urs von Balthasar explores these dynamics and articulates the self-question as "Who am I?" Another to address these issues is Bernard Lonergan who asks what it is to "be oneself." For Balthasar the question is answered only by the discovery of one's God-given vocation and mission. For Lonergan the question is answered by the authentic exercise of one's capacity for self-transcendence. Ultimately, I suggest, both approaches are complementary.

Both Balthasar and Lonergan envisage the possibility of lives lived in obedient attentiveness to the mystery of God's grace. For Balthasar that attentiveness will result in alertness to the vocational and missionary calling with which God uniquely addresses each person. For Lonergan such attentiveness will result in being in love with God and in a life oriented ultimately towards the mystery of God's love for us and our calling to serve in love. Balthasar and Lonergan complement one another in showing the full range of dynamics that constitute

the human person. In relationship with God and with others, and through the authentic exercise of self-transcending intentionality, human beings not only find fulfilment but live lives that reveal the glory of God. Taken together, the ways in which Balthasar and Lonergan address these foundational human questions provide a comprehensive philosophical and theological underpinning for the consideration of vocation.

In this study, I also draw on the work of the Lonergan scholar, Robert Doran, to help identify the dynamics of interiority that contribute to being adequately attentive to the manifestation of mystery in human consciousness. Doran's notion of psychic conversion, and in particular his expansion of that conversion in an organic direction, serve my concerns. Doran provides an explanation for the tranquillity and rest that the human person seeks. For Doran such rest arises through attunement to God wherein there is no longer an object to which intentionality is directed. There is instead a nonintentional abandonment to the love of God, an experience that can overwhelm us by its impact upon our consciousness. I suggest that particular spiritual phenomena manifest at these times, such as the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual senses. The exercise of the gift of wisdom as well as an alert cooperation with the experience of the spiritual senses enables the development of a connatural attunement to God. I explore how it is that spiritual senses become evident in human consciousness and suggest that theological reflection needs to attend to a highly refined form of pneumo-somatic data that is available for attentive receptivity.

Non-judgemental, accepting acknowledgement of the data of embodied consciousness is particularly important in the context of being exposed through faith to the new horizons of God's love for us. Such love can upset our previous equanimity in its challenge to encompass new demands and, in the process, can generate anxiety and dread. It can have a decentring effect. I reflect on postmodern thinking which gives significant attention to the dynamic of decentring, as well as to the body and its engagement with mystery. Throughout the study, I emphasise the value of attentiveness to the felt-sense of embodied consciousness as a means for engagement with mystery. Through such attentiveness, human beings can learn to be attuned to God and to align themselves with God's will for them in daily decision-making. People will thereby be helped to find the unique way in which God wishes them to love God and lovingly to serve others. In the ensuing discovery of their vocation, they find an answer to their existential self-questions.

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This study has been informed throughout by the insights, derived in my psychological practice, from those whose suffering was openly and transparently shared with me. I learned so much from them and my thoughts have been greatly influenced by all that they taught me. Though I cannot name them, I remember them individually and thank each one of them for the privilege of sharing in their journey.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

People of faith instinctively desire to hear God's unique call or to find the unique vocation offered to them. For some that desire becomes all-consuming. As we examine the phenomenon of "calling" or "vocation," we find the reason for such desire. The discovery of vocation entails coming to a point of rest, or spiritual poise, as a prelude for further commitment and creativity. This all-determining sense of direction often eluded the saints themselves until some kind of breakthrough occurred. Thérèse of Lisieux, for example, suffered from feelings of restlessness until she discovered her vocation, eventually crying out, "I finally [have] rest . . . my vocation, at last I have found it."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, for Augustine, our hearts find no peace unless they rest in God.<sup>2</sup> For poet and priest, George Herbert, rest is a "pulley," drawing humanity to God's breast.<sup>3</sup> For Paul it is rest that is to rule our hearts, acting as an umpire for our decisions and actions (Col 3:15).<sup>4</sup> The writer to the Hebrews exhorts us to strive to enter God's rest (Heb 4:1).

The great twentieth century theologian, Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988), recognises the human need for a reprieve from restlessness. For Balthasar unrest derives from the dichotomy present in those who reflect on their interior experience in solitude and its lack of alignment with their outer experience in interpersonal engagement. The experience generates a question that emerges perennially in human history.<sup>5</sup> It is the question, "Who am I?" Implicit in this question is another; it is the question, "What am I to do?" For Balthasar the discovery of one's vocation, and the unique expression in mission to which

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<sup>1</sup> St. Thérèse of Lisieux, *Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of St. Thérèse of Lisieux* (Washington: ICS Publications, 1976), 194.

<sup>2</sup> Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1961), §1.1.

<sup>3</sup> George Herbert, "The Pulley," in *The Metaphysical Poets* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), 136.

<sup>4</sup> See Herbert M. Carson, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary*, ed. R.V.G. Tasker, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1974), 89.

<sup>5</sup> For a study of the question raised by humanity, see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory: Prolegomena*, vol. 1 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 481-491.



God is calling one, both answers the existential self-question and yields existential rest. Hence, for Balthasar, as for Thérèse, rest is the outcome of learning to live lives in prayerful, faith-filled accordance with God's unique will. In this way there is found the peace that only Christ can give (Jn 14:27).

At this point, I would like to identify the personal and professional perspective determining my approach to this thesis. As a psychologist working with devout people of Christian faith who had suffered existential crises consequent upon traumatic life experiences, I too found that existential suffering generated agitation and restlessness. Rest for these people came only when they learnt how to be attentive to God's will in each moment of their lives. My reflections on their experience led to the two questions addressed by this study, namely:

1. *why* the vocational journey is so existentially satisfying, and
2. *how* human consciousness can be receptive to mystery at the core of a person's being.

The psychological field could address neither the sense of being called by someone beyond oneself nor the experience of mystery as one engaged with a spiritual world. I needed to look to the theological and philosophical fields to account for these phenomena. I realised that a phenomenological method was most suited to the research I wished to undertake, for it is phenomenology that studies experience and how things appear to us.<sup>6</sup>

I present the discussion under the following headings:

1. A Phenomenological Method
2. Aims and Limitations
3. Outline of the Thesis

## **1. A Phenomenological Method**

Thérèse of Lisieux knew she was seeking her vocation. Hans Urs von Balthasar, informed as he was by the history of humanity's existential quest, knew he was addressing the question "Who am I?" In contrast, the people who came to me knew only that they were suffering.

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<sup>6</sup> Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 2.

They would speak of feeling “lost” and of being separated from others in ways that were distressing to them. Their suffering challenged their previous felt-sense of presence to themselves. It also challenged their relationship with God who often appeared painfully absent. They had been stripped of their previous roles and personas. Their self-concepts had changed and they had no new concepts with which to replace them. They were no longer able to make sense of who they were. Emotionally, socially, cognitively, somatically and spiritually they were in new and unfamiliar territory. In effect, they were asking a profound existential question, “Who am I?” They were eventually to discover that there is a corollary to that question; it is the question of “What am I to do?”

From a professional point of view, my task was to provide psychological strategies that could mesh with their present faith stance. One aspect of my work entailed teaching clients to be aware of the bodily sensations, which accompanied their cognitional, emotional and spiritual struggles, in ways that did not engage cognitive or imaginative dimensions.<sup>7</sup> Eventually, such non-evaluative awareness and acceptance of sensation yielded equanimity and self-acceptance. When integrated with their prayer life, clients learnt to bring their newly-discovered embodied awareness into the ambit of faith. In particular, they learnt to accept the experiences of “not knowing,” of feeling “empty,” and of having a “vast void” within.

Through the prayerful, faith-filled acceptance of their suffering, my clients discovered that a mysterious, apophatic dimension existed as their core experience of self. When they learnt to hold that place open before God in faith, not only did their suffering gain spiritual meaning and value, but a new, albeit mysterious, sense of self arose with a capacity to be attentive to the impact of grace felt at the level of embodied consciousness. Their sense of self had been transformed through their suffering and interior work. They were now free to cooperate with life’s exigences in the discovery of who they were to become. They finally

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<sup>7</sup> This approach derives from “mindfulness” techniques which are inspired by ancient Buddhist practices. For the contribution of mindfulness to psychological health, see, for example, Bruno Cayoun, *Mindfulness-integrated Cognitive Behaviour Therapy: General Principles and Guidelines* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Forthcoming); Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Coming to Our Senses: Healing Ourselves and the World through Mindfulness* (New York: Hyperion Books, 2005); Daniel J. Siegel, *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation* (New York: Bantam Books, 2010).

found peace. Once they reached this stage, both the client and I usually considered that our therapeutic goals had been achieved and therapy was gently terminated.

From a personal point of view, I was fascinated by the process of transformation. I reflected that, while these clients had finished a therapy programme, in another sense they were just beginning a life programme, a programme of being alert to God's leading in the moment by moment details of daily living. In effect, they were learning to be attentive to God's call in their lives. The Christian tradition refers to this as a vocational journey. My work with people's existential suffering had brought me to the issue of vocation. Yet there was another dimension which interested me. At the core of my clients' existential distress was the inability to handle mystery. They came to me knowing neither who they were nor how to relate to others. Therapeutic progress essentially comprised learning to accept the felt-sense of not knowing. In other words, clients had to learn to accept mystery at the centre of their being. It was from this context that the two questions addressed by the study arose. Given that psychological dynamics were inadequate to account for the phenomena of interest to me, I considered that the best way to explore how the human person engages with mystery in the pursuit of a vocation was by using a phenomenological method.

The phenomenological method was founded by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and developed by his student, Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). The method flourished particularly in Europe during the twentieth century, and postmodern thinking continues the tradition.

Phenomenologists react against overly rigid ways of conceiving reality, and seek to encourage an attitude of open receptivity to phenomena as they present themselves to the observer. Avoiding the overly rationalistic and conceptualistic development in philosophical thinking that had occurred since Descartes, Husserl seeks a return to the "things themselves" (*'Sachen selbst' zurückgehen*).<sup>8</sup> He articulates the principle that everything presented to consciousness is to be accepted as it is and to be subject to cognition. Husserl refers to the experience of things so presented to consciousness as "intuition" (*die Anschauung*). To speak of intuition in this way refers not to an insight disconnected from inquiry and reflection. It

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<sup>8</sup> Keven Hart, Introduction to Kevin Hart, ed., *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 3.

refers, rather, to an experience directly within one's "sphere of awareness."<sup>9</sup> Husserl further suggests that the data of sense consciousness is not alone in being present to our consciousness. He proposes that more abstract "concepts and relations" are also presented to us in a "precognitive moment" and refers to this dimension as "categorical intuition." Hence, for Husserl, experience covers both "sensuous particulars and abstract relations such as negation and conjunction, plurality and totality."<sup>10</sup>

Heidegger takes up the notion of categorical intuition, maintaining that, when we see an object, we have "two visions: sensuous vision and categorical vision."<sup>11</sup> In the whole that is greater than the sum of the parts, a dynamic to which Balthasar gives the term "form" (*Gestalt*), we see a "surplus" beyond that of the empirical, sense data. We not only see the concrete sense data of a book or inkwell, but also the "is" that constitutes the object as it is. He concludes, "In order to be 'seen' in this way, it *must* be *given*," the passive tense of this expression being of great significance for the French postmodern phenomenologist, Jean-Luc Marion (1946- ).<sup>12</sup> Hence, for Heidegger, being is given. It is not an abstraction; it is given in categorical intuition.

Postmodern thinking goes beyond both Husserl and Heidegger in its emphasis on what Marion calls an "ultimately radical empiricism," which admits all experience as gift.<sup>13</sup> While this emphasis does not negate a critically realist position, since insight into and understanding of the experience are still required, postmodern thought values the notion of counter-intentionality, or of reverse, or inverse, intentionality.<sup>14</sup> In contrast to the ego's

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<sup>9</sup> Hart, Introduction to Hart, ed., *Counter-Experiences*, 5.

<sup>10</sup> Hart, Introduction to Hart, ed., *Counter-Experiences*, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Heidegger, quoted in Hart, Introduction to Hart, ed., *Counter-Experiences*, 6.

<sup>12</sup> Heidegger, quoted in Hart, Introduction to Hart, ed., *Counter-Experiences*, 8. Emphasis original.

<sup>13</sup> Kevin Hart, *Postmodernism: A Beginner's Guide* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2004), 30.

<sup>14</sup> A position of critical realism derives from an analysis of intentionality and considers that truth is found by correctly understanding one's experience, for which see Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Insight: a Study of Human Understanding* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1983). For a succinct statement of distinctions between naïve realism, idealism and critical realism, see Bernard J. F. Lonergan, "Existenz and Aggiornamento," in *Collection: Papers by Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 225. For the coexistence of postmodern thought and critical realism, see Anthony J. Kelly,

exercise of an active intentionality oriented towards truth and action, postmodern thought emphasises the value of openness, receptivity and surrender to the gift of that which is prior to the ego. From a Jungian point of view, the mediating psychic structure that permits such receptivity is the larger self.<sup>15</sup> In other words, what for the postmodern thinker is reverse intentionality, for Jung is surrender to the deeper dynamics of the self of which the ego is merely an important part. Regardless of the terms used to describe the surrender, it is attentive receptivity at the point of reverse intentionality, or the surrender of the ego to the self, with which I am concerned. It is here that the experience of mystery unfolds, and here that one must learn how to accept and understand the experience.

While a phenomenological approach emphasises the role of intentionality in experience and the consequent discovery of truth and value, it does not reduce meaning and truth to the psychological dynamics of the observer. To do so would be psychologism. It would be a failure to appreciate that truth belongs to the very “being of things.”<sup>16</sup> By “being,” the phenomenologist does not refer to an abstract, general concept, for being has no existence in itself.<sup>17</sup> The being of a thing is found only by inquiry into that which constitutes its uniqueness.<sup>18</sup> In the case of the human being, for instance, inquiry constitutes the human being in a way that it does not for an animal or a rock. In the case of the rock, understanding the truth of the rock requires investigation. It will reveal the shape, colour and chemical compounds, for example, which determine some components of its truth. Hence, truth does not exist independently of the observer but arises through interaction between subject and object. It is this engagement of the human being with the world in the pursuit of truth that

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*The Resurrection Effect: Transforming Christian Life and Thought* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2008), 23-24, 31. Note that, as well as the more commonly used term “counter-intentionality,” both “reverse” and “inverse” intentionality can be found in the postmodern literature, for which see, for example, Renée Ryan, “The Leuven Philosophy Newsletter,” (2004), 28-29, <http://www.hiw.kuleuven.be/eng/alumni/newslet13.pdf> (accessed September 30, 2009).

<sup>15</sup> For Jung the self comprises both the conscious and unconscious aspects of psychological functioning, for which see Carl Jung, *Aion: Researches in the Phenomenology of the Self* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959).

<sup>16</sup> Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 114.

<sup>17</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics: The Realm of Metaphysics in Antiquity*, vol. 4 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), 404.

<sup>18</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 348; Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 65.

leads some to argue that truth has a dramatic structure.<sup>19</sup> In some circumstances, the truth of being that is sought is known only through love. Appreciation of the gift of God's love and the discovery of ultimate truth within the ambit of that love are very important to the two theologians who contribute most to this study, namely Hans Urs von Balthasar and Bernard Lonergan (1904–1984).

The phenomenological method is especially adept at accessing a frequently overlooked aspect of our multi-faceted human experience. It is an aspect that is pertinent to the perception of mystery, namely embodied consciousness. When asked what was experienced in a specific situation, people will readily offer a thought. When pressed further, they may offer a feeling or emotion. Rarely do they observe that they had a particular somatic sensation. The immediacy of such experiences is usually inaccessible to minds that habitually tend to live in the past or the future, as is the habit of most people in the pressured demands of everyday living.<sup>20</sup> Only the capacity for awareness of the present will enable appreciation of the immediacy of sensation. Yet it is that very capacity that is so necessary for living attentive to God's will in each moment. In the immediate givenness of the experience, we are open to depths of the psyche that are not available when we return to the intentional exercise of question and reflection and so on. We are open to a rich and fertile field that can yield image and symbol with a power of communication much greater than that accessible to the relative narrowness of more rigid, ego-based modes of communication.

In this study, I argue that the discovery of one's vocation and its unique expression in a specific mission are served by a faith-filled attentiveness to embodied consciousness. Such embodied consciousness is an important, though frequently overlooked, means whereby the mystery at the core of our being can become manifest. It is in this way that I hope to contribute towards the development of a theological phenomenology of vocation.

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<sup>19</sup> See, for example, D. C. Schindler, *Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Dramatic Structure of Truth* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 163-254.

<sup>20</sup> Kabat-Zinn, *Coming to Our Senses*, 22.

## 2. Aims and Limitations

The first aim of this study is to articulate a phenomenology of vocation in a way that is of practical help to people who are struggling with vocational issues. My second aim is to stress the importance of attentive receptivity to the data of embodied consciousness that manifests when people attend to the experience of mystery at the core of their being. I also seek to serve the theological community by contributing towards the development of a theological and philosophical foundation for vocational reflection. These goals are each in themselves vast fields for exploration. Hence, there are necessarily some limits to the study.

There is much that I presuppose. From the point of view of foundational Christian teaching, I assume that one seeking to discern a vocation is living an orthodox Christian life, attentive to the teaching of Christ in the gospels. Further, I assume that he or she appreciates the value of exercising virtue and the practice of prayer, both of which foster the capacity to hear God's call. From the more technical point of view pertinent to spiritual directors, given that the study is a theological rather than psychological phenomenology, I will not be exploring the minutiae of affective states to which spiritual directors typically encourage their directees to pay attention.

While I seek to provide a theological grounding for vocational reflection, I do not present detailed philosophical analyses of, for example, the analogy of being or the ontological difference in Hans Urs von Balthasar's thought, nor the various approaches to being that different philosophers endorse. Similarly, although I draw on postmodern considerations, I do not engage with the postmodern debate concerning onto-theology and the endeavour to overcome metaphysics.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, in common with postmodern thought I do place an

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<sup>21</sup> Note that even Hans Urs von Balthasar who influenced the postmodernists does not seek to overcome metaphysics, for which see Schindler, *The Dramatic Structure of Truth*, 257n253. For an excellent critique of the Heideggerian basis for postmodern thought, see David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2003); David Bentley Hart, "The Offering of Names: Metaphysics, Nihilism, and Analogy," in *Reasons and the Reasons of Faith*, ed. Paul J. Griffiths and Reinhard Hütter, *Theology for the Twenty-First Century* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 255-291.

emphasis on the category of self-presence, or self-possession (Balthasar), or the tacit background experience of the subject as subject (Lonergan).<sup>22</sup>

While fully accepting that communion with God has a distinctly Marian–ecclesial dimension for Hans Urs von Balthasar, the scope of this study precludes incorporation of these dimensions of his thought.<sup>23</sup> The limits of the study also mean that only brief treatment is given to the important role of the Holy Spirit. An adequate examination of the role of the Holy Spirit in mission requires a comprehensive pneumatology which is outside the scope of this thesis.<sup>24</sup> The confines of the study also do not permit a full presentation of the multi-faceted elements of human consciousness that Lonergan articulates. I will, in footnotes, indicate possibilities for further reading that concerns notions whose meaning I assume is understood by the reader. In my discussions of Hans Urs von Balthasar, Bernard Lonergan and the postmodernists, I refer to the different epistemological positions of naïve realism, idealism and critical realism without significant elaboration. Again, I hope that the informed reader will appreciate the differences between these positions, articulated so clearly by Bernard Lonergan. While the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual senses warrant theses in themselves and while I draw on them to contribute to my argument, a comprehensive account of them is also beyond the scope of the study.

Some may question the wisdom of a study which incorporates thought from such disparate sources as that of Hans Urs von Balthasar, Bernard Lonergan and postmodern thinking. Hans Urs von Balthasar influenced the postmodernists, and the postmodernists frequently dismiss Lonergan as a modern, thereby implying that conversation between the Balthasarian camp and the Lonerganian camp is not possible. This issue could comprise a thesis in itself.

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<sup>22</sup> See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory: Dramatis Personae: Man in God*, vol. 2 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 207-210. For an excellent discussion of tacit, background self-awareness in Bernard Lonergan, see Fred Lawrence, "The Fragility of Consciousness: Lonergan and the Postmodern Concern for the Other," *Theological Studies* 54, no. 1 (1993): 55-94.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Balthasar's discussion of the "subject who receives," in Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics: Theology: The New Covenant*, vol. 7 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 89-103; David L. Schindler, "Introduction," *Communio* 17 (1990): 297.

<sup>24</sup> For Robert Doran's observation that "a major pressing need for theology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is pneumatology" see Jeremy Blackwood, "Jeremy Blackwood: Mixing Oil and Water," *The Lonergan Website* (2008), <http://lonerganwebsite.blogspot.com/> (accessed March 31, 2009).



Certainly Lonergan is a modern since he looks for perennial truths. Nevertheless, to the extent that he finds those truths in the empirical patterns of human consciousness and not in the content of classical, universal norms, he does not qualify for the usual postmodern critique. Although I do consider, and dismiss, the consideration that there may be a collision of perspectives between Balthasar and Lonergan, once again the limits of the study do not permit a comprehensive treatment of this issue.

Even though the concept of vocation has often been identified with the choice of a priestly, religious or married state of life and, more recently, a lay single state, my understanding of the concept is much broader. Consequently, I do not discuss the various states of life since, from the perspective of this study, God's call to a particular vocational expression in mission can occur within any state of life and at any time within that state. Further, as a lay member of the Catholic Church, my emphasis is on the integration into everyday life of intimacy with God, an emphasis pertinent to all people in all states of life.

By drawing on the work of Hans Urs von Balthasar and Bernard Lonergan, I hope to contribute a solid theological foundation for reflection on the significance of the discernment of one's vocation. Further, I hope to point towards a mode of attentiveness that heightens awareness of mystery. This mode requires that one recognises the value of receptivity to the empirical data of human consciousness for the discernment of a vocation. We turn now to a delineation of how the argument for these matters is presented.

### **3. Outline of the Thesis**

Given that the concept of vocation has accumulated various meanings over two thousand years of Christian history, I need in the first instance to clarify exactly what I mean by "vocation." Hence Chapter Two considers the notion of vocation as found in scripture and as found in the tradition of the Church. It reflects also on the exercise of discernment, which is the term traditionally given to the process of recognising a vocation. To the degree that the founder of the Jesuits, Ignatius of Loyola, has particularly informed the tradition of both vocation and discernment, I give significant attention to his work. I also explore current thinking on vocation and the value that is accorded to attentiveness to interiority. While I fully appreciate the common call to "listen to the heart," I wish to ground such descriptive

accounts more explanatorily. I argue that Hans Urs von Balthasar and Bernard Lonergan complement one another in this respect: Balthasar grounds the discovery of vocation on a philosophical and theological foundation while Lonergan offers a more explanatory account of human consciousness.

In Chapter Three I show that attentiveness to experience played an important part in Hans Urs von Balthasar's life and theology. I then elaborate upon that theology, the aesthetic and dramatic dimensions of which are particularly relevant to our reflections on the way in which the human person engages with mystery. This chapter begins to address our first question, namely why the discovery of vocation and mission is so existentially satisfying. The answer, according to Hans Urs von Balthasar, resides in the human person's increasing identification with Christ. Given the union of person and mission in Christ, there develops for the human person a corresponding union of person and mission and consequential existential rest.

Chapter Four explores the principles that enable such identification with Christ. It does this by presenting Balthasar's philosophical and theological foundations for the possibility of identifying a vocation. It also begins to address how it is that we are receptive to mystery. Balthasar argues that the human person has an a priori ontological receptivity to mystery. The Christological foundations for our receptivity are particularly important, as is the gift of relationship, both of which constitute essential dimensions of our receptivity to mystery. Such receptivity ultimately occurs through the Holy Spirit who enables a transformation of our consciousness. This chapter presents Balthasar's descriptive account of consciousness and suggests that a more explanatory account is needed to answer adequately the second question of our study. This is the question of how human consciousness can be receptive to the experience of mystery at the core of a person's being, attentiveness to which facilitates the discovery of one's vocation.

Complementing Balthasar's descriptive account, a more explanatory account of consciousness is provided by the work of Bernard Lonergan whom I introduce in Chapter Five. Lonergan, like Balthasar, was formed by Ignatian spirituality and he too is concerned with the spiritual dimensions of the human person and the dynamics of interiority that are necessary for our cooperation with grace. Lonergan recognises that an authentic and religiously converted subjectivity, accompanied by an interiorly differentiated consciousness,

contributes to heightening one's capacity for attentiveness to God's grace. For Lonergan attentiveness to mystery, to a "known unknown," engages empirical dimensions of the human psyche that are necessary for intelligent and rational reflection and for the subsequent action that constitutes us. Consequently, I suggest that a further heightening of awareness of the empirical dimensions of human consciousness will facilitate engagement with God's will for one's life.

In Chapter Six I address a problem that might have arisen in readers' minds at the engagement in conversation of two scholars who are often thought to be incompatible with one another, namely Hans Urs von Balthasar and Bernard Lonergan. Robert Doran demonstrates that Balthasar and Lonergan, far from being opposed to one another, actually complement one another. I present Doran's work on psychic conversion and elaborate on the aspects of empirical consciousness introduced in the previous chapter, suggesting that Doran's proposal to expand the notion of psychic conversion in the organic direction is most helpful. I draw on Doran's reflections on the relationship between revelation and what he terms "reception" and discuss his notion of attunement as a nonintentional moment of rest. I suggest that particular spiritual phenomena can manifest at such times.

Chapter Seven explores these spiritual phenomena. It considers the special manifestation of empirical consciousness in the experience of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual senses. Since this chapter emphasises the important role of attentiveness to the body in spirituality, I draw here on postmodern considerations. The postmodernists look to Balthasar as one of their own but a sympathetic reading of Lonergan shows that he can complement the postmodern endeavour in constructive ways.

Chapter Eight concludes the thesis, synthesising all that has gone before. Within the presentation of a theological phenomenology of vocation, it will be evident that a number of emphases emerge. It will be argued that existential unrest, deriving from a foundational, existential self-question, can motivate the vocational search. Faith-filled attentive receptivity to the mystery of grace manifested in the pneumo-somatic data of embodied consciousness is of significant assistance in that search. This is so because subsequent reflection on that data can enable both the discernment and the exercise of one's mission with an accompanying experience of fulfilment in Christ and a life lived to the glory of God.

## CHAPTER 2

### VOCATION AND DISCERNMENT

This chapter surveys the contributions of scripture, tradition and contemporary writings to thinking in the field of vocation and discernment. In particular, it looks to St. Ignatius of Loyola as a seminal figure for vocational thinking and for instruction in the appropriate means for discerning the various choices that are available to the one who seeks to follow God's guidance. While there has been much valuable work in the field by contemporary writers, ultimately I conclude that a more comprehensive presentation of vocation is needed if we are adequately to understand why the discovery of a vocation resolves existential quandaries.

The chapter has five foci:

1. Vocation and Contemporary Culture
2. Vocation in Scripture and Tradition
3. Some Contemporary Theological Approaches to Vocation
4. Discernment in Scripture, Tradition and Contemporary Thinking
5. Summary and Conclusion

#### 1. Vocation and Contemporary Culture

A. J. Conyers offers insightful reflections on the relationship between vocation and our present culture, arguing that the issue of vocation is most pertinent for these times.<sup>1</sup> Conyers points to the extraordinariness of a notion that is typically given little thought. The idea of calling is extraordinary for it challenges the notion that we are makers of our own destinies. It challenges the idea that individual choices, derived merely from self-centred processes of decision-making, determine what we are to make of ourselves. Instead, it suggests that we have the option of attending to a transcendent source for our decision-

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<sup>1</sup> See A. J. Conyers, *The Listening Heart: Vocation and the Crisis of Modern Culture* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2009), 10.

making, rather than looking only to egocentrically derived bases. For Conyers vocation is a response to a summons rather than one's own choice for a particular course of action.<sup>2</sup>

Conyers laments the way in which the loss of a sense of vocation contributes to the present cultural malaise, which is evidenced in increasing violence at both international and domestic levels, drug abuse, disaffection from traditional values, personal alienation and a utilitarian rather than reverent approach to the things of this world. Conyers argues that the foundational cause of these regrettable societal developments is an emphasis on individual will and choice instead of alertness to a "calling that originates from above and beyond."<sup>3</sup> He points to the Enlightenment as the source of this development. Kant, for example, described enlightenment as the individualistic use of one's intelligence without reference to another.<sup>4</sup> Such a solipsistic approach to life will inevitably result in the experience of alienation that is apparent in much behaviour today, for the human person is essentially a social person, designed to live in community and in harmonious relationship with others. In the absence of a felt-sense of acceptance and valuing by others, individuals lack self-assurance and are exposed to self-doubt. The ensuing interior pain frequently drives impulsive, usually aggressive, behaviour, which can be directed both outwardly and inwardly.<sup>5</sup>

For Conyers an ultimate sense of acceptance derives from knowing one's life is lived within a larger context of being called by, and in service to, a divine Other. Conyers argues that it is impossible to form communities with a sense of permanence and value merely on the basis of individual choice.<sup>6</sup> One can readily renege on choices derived merely from an egocentric world view. Such broken promises make healthy societal development most difficult. In contrast, a world view which recognises that the ego is in service to something greater than

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<sup>2</sup> Conyers, *The Listening Heart*, 13.

<sup>3</sup> Conyers, *The Listening Heart*, 11.

<sup>4</sup> Cited in Conyers, *The Listening Heart*, 17.

<sup>5</sup> The delinquent behaviours of many young people who lack sources for self-affirmation demonstrate outwardly expressed aggression. Inwardly expressed aggression is evident in the impulsive physical self-harm that distracts people who suffer a borderline personality disorder from more distressing emotional pain.

<sup>6</sup> Conyers, *The Listening Heart*, 11.

itself generates humility and perseverance. Societies built upon this dynamic of service make progress in a way that is not possible when self-seeking dominates.

Conyers identifies two motivational dynamics in societies. There is either an attraction to another through the beauty and justice manifested by that other, or the other dominates by will and power. While either love or power can inform our actions, usually both are operative.<sup>7</sup> A society built on the former is much more enduring and validating for its members than a society built on the latter. To the extent that attentiveness to God's calling on one's life derives from a loving relationship with God, such an attitude will generate much more fulfilment than life-choices derived merely from egocentric decisions. The latter approach is, however, the current societal preference. Conyers argues that this is because the values of love and justice challenge egocentricity and it is for this reason that they are not popular.

There are, Conyers argues, four reasons for the "assault upon the ego" entailed by subjecting oneself to the notion of a call.<sup>8</sup> First, the idea of a call implies that one discerningly submits one's actions to the consideration of a divine Other, rather than pursuing one's own self-will. Secondly, a divine summons is frequently against the will of its recipient. As examples, Conyers cites Moses, Jeremiah and Jonah, as well as Jesus who asked that his cup be taken from him.<sup>9</sup> Thirdly, the calling involves hardship, as Paul's sufferings testify. Fourthly, people can be readily distracted from their calling by the comforts of ordinary life, instanced by the deteriorating societal values of the Israelites once they had settled in the land of Canaan.<sup>10</sup>

While the notion of vocation may not be granted a ready hearing, it remains important. Given that it requires that we respond to a mysterious initiative from beyond ourselves, it requires the capacity to attend to that initiative and it requires discernment. The following

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<sup>7</sup> Conyers, *The Listening Heart*, 12.

<sup>8</sup> Conyers, *The Listening Heart*, 14.

<sup>9</sup> Conyers, *The Listening Heart*, 13-14.

<sup>10</sup> Conyers, *The Listening Heart*, 15.

amplifies the notion of vocation and introduces the dynamic of discernment that is so necessary for an adequate response.

## 2. Vocation in Scripture and Tradition

The term “vocation” derives from the Latin, *vocatio*, meaning “calling,” which in turn is related to the verb, *vocare*, meaning “to call” or “to summon.” These terms appear in ecclesiastical Latin as variations of *vocatio* and hence the Latin-influenced Catholic tradition uses the term “vocation.” The scriptural Greek, however, uses words that stem from *kalein*, meaning “call,” *kletos*, meaning “called,” and *klesis*, meaning “calling.”<sup>11</sup> I use the terms call and vocation synonymously.

The Old Testament reveals a common human vocation in God’s instruction to humanity to multiply and till the earth.<sup>12</sup> The vocation becomes more specific when God called Israel to be God’s own people. However, God chose not only a nation; God chose specific individuals to fulfil specific purposes. Abraham (Gen 12:1), Moses (Ex 19:3), Samuel (1 Sam 3:4), and Isaiah (49:1), for example, were all chosen by God for a particular task. The visions of numerous other Old Testament figures led them to an active prophetic role, for God’s word effects what it says, as evidenced in God’s speaking creation into being (Gen 1:3).<sup>13</sup> Jeremiah’s experience of being unable to contain the burning words because of the “fire shut up in [his] bones” (Jer 20:9) testifies to the power of that word when it impacts on a human being.

The Old Testament reports that Israel followed God’s call out of Egypt, through a literal desert of trial and transformation, and into a land flowing metaphorically with milk and

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<sup>11</sup> See M. R. W. Farrer, “Call, Calling,” in *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1982), 161. The Greek word *klesis* forms the English words “cleric” and “ecclesiastical,” while the Greek word for Church is *ekklesia* for which see Conyers, *The Listening Heart*, 12-13.

<sup>12</sup> See Arthur G. Holder, “Vocation,” in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 638.

<sup>13</sup> Holder, “Vocation,” 638.

honey. The New Testament reports that Jesus similarly called people to follow him.<sup>14</sup> Jesus called his disciples to follow, and in that following they discovered abundant life. After his ascension, Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, continued to call disciples, evidenced, for example, in Saul's dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-6). Whereas the call was addressed initially to a people, Jesus Christ addressed his call to individuals. The call continues to be addressed to individuals.

Jesus' call carries the hope of salvation, positive responses to which issue in discipleship.<sup>15</sup> Such discipleship gives both intimacy with Jesus and responsibility for carrying on his mission. Jesus' words to Simon Peter and Andrew apply to all: "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people" (Matt 4:19). Implicit in Jesus' instruction is a twofold dimension. The disciples are to follow Jesus; they are also to exercise a task. Hence, on the one hand, following Jesus leads to intimacy with the Son of God; on the other hand, it leads to sharing the good news.

The former emphasis is present in Paul's greeting to "God's beloved in Rome." They were "called to be saints" (Rom 1:7). Similarly, the author of the Letter to the Ephesians urges the followers of Jesus "to lead a life worthy of the calling to which [they] have been called" (Eph 4:1). The Letters to the Philippians and to the Hebrews, in their references to the "heavenly call," likewise emphasise a life directed towards intimacy and union with God in Christ Jesus. In contrast, the Letter to the Corinthians, some of whom were slaves while others were free, places the highlight on a state of life and the tasks commensurate with that state. This emphasis is relatively unusual. Most scriptural references to call are to intimacy with God, with the implicit assumption of a life of purity and holiness. Circumstances changed as the Christian tradition developed when considerations of vocation tended to identify God's call with a particular state in life.

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<sup>14</sup> Note that Origen saw this journey as having mystical meaning, referring to our conversion in the departure from Egypt and the journey through the desert as a "complex itinerary" of the spiritual life, for which see Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism: Origins to the Fifth Century*, 3 vols., The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism, vol. 1 (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1991), 117-118.

<sup>15</sup> For a brief discussion of discipleship in the New Testament, see Thomas P. Rausch, "Discipleship," in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 249-250.



In the early Church a Christian vocation entailed a radical decision to repent from an old lifestyle and enter into a new life through baptism.<sup>16</sup> The decision had major implications. It required converts to surrender behaviours incompatible with Christ's teaching and frequently exposed them to persecution. Those called to be Christians readily endured such persecution, for the calling so drew them that happiness derived only from unswerving obedience. Athanasius' description of St. Antony of the Desert describes one whose heart yearned within him from early childhood for the things of the Spirit.<sup>17</sup> Eventually he fulfilled this yearning by selling all he possessed to live in the desert in a way that enabled him to focus on Jesus Christ. Augustine similarly exemplifies an interior dynamic when, after great agitation of mind and heart, he obeyed an inspiration to pick up his bible and read.<sup>18</sup> As he did so, his eyes fell on a passage that called him to abandon his old ways for a new life in Jesus Christ, a call which he promptly obeyed.

At an early stage in the development of the Christian community, being Christian and adopting a lifestyle consistent with Christ's teaching was a vocation in itself. Once Christianity became a state religion and infant baptism the norm, the term "vocation" was applied more strictly to those called to the religious state of life. Later, vocation came to refer to the choice for a particular state in life, whether religious or married, virginal or conjugal, and to this day some continue to limit the term vocation to the choice between these two options.<sup>19</sup> The Protestant emphasis, on the other hand, was not on the state but on the task. For the Protestant reformers everyday roles accomplished through the love of God constituted a vocation.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Note that the New Testament word for Church is *ekklesia*, derived from the Greek *klesis*, for which see Conyers, *The Listening Heart*, 13.

<sup>17</sup> Athanasius, *Athanasius: The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, trans. Robert C. Gregg (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 30-31.

<sup>18</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, §7.12.

<sup>19</sup> For the vocational options of a "conjugal or virginal" state in life, see Antonio Sicari, "Mission, Ascesis, Crisis," *Communio* 17 (1990): 335.

<sup>20</sup> For the observation that Martin Luther and John Calvin contributed to this view, see Holder, "Vocation," 638.

Yet, as Conyers points out, although a call can be to take up a work, it can also be a call to leave work. Matthew left his tax collecting. James and John left their father to carry on his fishing business without them. Peter, though married, and Andrew left their fishing to follow Jesus.<sup>21</sup> These early disciples demonstrate that family ties and present occupations must sometimes be surrendered for the sake of Christ. God's ways are not human ways; God's call often disturbs settled expectations about how things should be done. Ultimately, it is union with God's will regardless of societal judgement that is required. Only growth in holiness engenders such freedom and it is to holiness that Catholic Church statements have consistently pointed.

Vatican II used the term vocation in various senses. It spoke of the vocation of professed religious, of all Christians, and indeed of all people as being called to become one in God.<sup>22</sup> The whole Church is called to holiness.<sup>23</sup> Pope Paul VI identified the Council's call to the "fullness of Christian life and the perfection of charity" as "the most characteristic element" of the Council's teaching.<sup>24</sup> Vatican II still considered that the religious state, in its public profession of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience, exemplified "holiness by a narrower path."<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, as the Catholic Catechism points out, while those in religious life formally profess the counsels, the laity too can adopt them.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Conyers, *The Listening Heart*, 16.

<sup>22</sup> See Documents of Vatican II, "Lumen Gentium: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," in *The Documents of Vatican II* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967), §13.

<sup>23</sup> Vatican II, "Lumen Gentium," §§39-42.

<sup>24</sup> Paul VI, "Sanctitatis Clarior," Motu Proprio, March 19, 1969 quoted in Joseph Bolin, "Paths of Love: The Discernment of Vocation According to Aquinas, Ignatius, and Pope John Paul II," (2008), <http://www.pathsoflove.com/paths-of-love-chapter1.html#sdfootnote3anc> (accessed March 10, 2009).

<sup>25</sup> Vatican II, "Lumen Gentium," §13. For a challenge to the position that the religious life provides a narrower way, see Thomas Merton, *The Sign of Jonas* (London: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1953), 148-149; Thomas Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude* (London: Burns and Oates, 1958), 58-60. Merton reflects on the experience of poverty in monastic orders versus the more dire situation of poverty-stricken families.

<sup>26</sup> See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (Homebush, NSW: St Pauls, 1994), §915.

Vatican II reflected on the role of the laity in the Church and the world.<sup>27</sup> Pope John Paul II endorses the council's teaching in his encyclical letter, "Christifideles Laici," which argues for the union of a vocation to holiness with the call to mission. Pope John Paul II observes, "Holiness [is] a fundamental presupposition and an irreplaceable condition for everyone in fulfilling the mission of salvation within the Church."<sup>28</sup> John Paul II points to the secular character of the lay expression, stressing that the term "secular" must be understood theologically rather than sociologically. In other words, it must be understood within the context of a creation handed over by God to "women and men, so that they may participate in the work of creation, free creation from the influence of sin and sanctify themselves" in the various forms of secular life.<sup>29</sup> John Paul envisages the life of the laity as one in which union with God informs every aspect of their lives. He cites the Synod Fathers:

The unity of life of the lay faithful is of the greatest importance: indeed they must be sanctified in everyday professional and social life. Therefore, to respond to their vocation, the lay faithful must see their daily activities as an occasion to join themselves to God, fulfill his will, serve other people and lead them to communion with God in Christ.<sup>30</sup>

John Paul identifies the elements involved in discovering one's vocation and its particular expression in a specific mission. Receptive listening, prayer, spiritual direction, discernment of God-given gifts, as well as an awareness of the social and historical situation, all contribute. John Paul acknowledges that there are significant, transitional times in our lives when the need for making particular decisions is thrust upon us. Yet he insists also on the necessity for ongoing discernment and availability for vocation and missionary expression. Citing the parable of the labourers whom the master regularly called to work in the vineyard (Mt 20), John Paul insists that God "calls at every hour of life" in ways that are precise and

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<sup>27</sup> See Documents of Vatican II, "Apostolicam Actuositatem: Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity," in *The Documents of Vatican II* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967), §§1-33; Vatican II, "Lumen Gentium," §§30-38.

<sup>28</sup> Pope John Paul II, "Christifideles Laici," *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation* (1988), §17, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_30121988\\_christifideles-laici\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici_en.html) (accessed September 4, 2009).

<sup>29</sup> John Paul II, "Christifideles Laici," §15. See also Vatican II, "Lumen Gentium," §31.

<sup>30</sup> John Paul II, "Christifideles Laici," §17.

explicit. Consequently, it is incumbent upon each person to sustain a vigilant and attentive receptivity to God's voice.<sup>31</sup>

Pope Benedict XVI also speaks of vocation in a way that is congruent with authenticity in everyday life.<sup>32</sup> He identifies our vocation as the expression of the love and truth which God has planted "in the heart and mind of every person."<sup>33</sup> Indeed, for Pope Benedict, as for Pope Paul VI, all people are called to develop and fulfil themselves and in so doing they constitute their very lives as vocational.<sup>34</sup> As Paul VI observes, everyone is "born to seek self-fulfillment, for every human life is called to some task by God."<sup>35</sup> Here the emphasis is on the human person's very being as a precondition for authentic doing. Both popes point also to the importance of interpersonal relations. Pope Benedict reflects, "As a spiritual being, the human creature is defined through interpersonal relations."<sup>36</sup>

The two elements that Pope Benedict identifies as constitutive of human beings—namely authentic subjectivity and interpersonal relationships—are the dimensions to which I give particular attention in this study. Hans Urs von Balthasar is the major contributor to my reflections on the latter, and Bernard Lonergan on the former. Both were formed by the charism of St. Ignatius of Loyola (1492-1556) whose life and writings continue to inspire vocational thinking. Indeed, through the centuries Ignatius has been highly influential in

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<sup>31</sup> John Paul II, "Christifideles Laici," §58.

<sup>32</sup> See Pope Benedict XVI, "Caritas in Veritate," *Encyclical Letter* (2009), [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20090629\\_caritas-in-veritate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate_en.html) (accessed August 23, 2009). The pope's encyclical reflects on Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio*, for which see Pope Paul VI, "Populorum Progressio," *Encyclical Letter* (1967), [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/paul\\_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_enc\\_26031967\\_populorum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum_en.html) (accessed September 23, 2009).

<sup>33</sup> Benedict XVI, "Caritas in Veritate," §1.

<sup>34</sup> See Paul VI, "Populorum Progressio," §§15-17. Pope Benedict here endorses the reflections of Pope Paul VI.

<sup>35</sup> Paul VI, "Populorum Progressio," §15.

<sup>36</sup> Benedict XVI, "Caritas in Veritate," §53. See also Paul VI, "Populorum Progressio," §17.

determining the way in which people reflect on vocation.<sup>37</sup> I move now to consider Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Order of Jesuits.

Through paying attention to the experiences which he underwent while recovering from a leg wound in hospital, Ignatius discovered that different reflections elicited different responses. He writes of his own experience:

When he thought of worldly matters he found much delight, but after growing weary and dismissing them he found that he was dry and unhappy. But when he thought of going barefoot to Jerusalem and of eating nothing but vegetables and of imitating the saints in all the austerities they performed, he not only found consolation in these thoughts but even after they had left him he remained happy and joyful.<sup>38</sup>

Thinking of worldly matters yielded initial delight and subsequent weariness; thinking of spiritual matters yielded enduring consolation, even though it might be at great cost to untransformed flesh.<sup>39</sup> The *Spiritual Exercises* were the fruit of this period.

The *Exercises* are presented over four “weeks.”<sup>40</sup> After a preparatory period that helps retreat participants to experience God’s love and confirmation of themselves through that love, the “first week” of the *Exercises* aims to free people from egocentric attachments which hinder surrender to God’s will. It begins the process of healing a self, which is divided within itself by sin and hence is unable freely to pursue the path towards wholeness in Christ.<sup>41</sup> By leading them to consider their sins, the *Exercises* enable exercitants to participate in the “purgative life.”<sup>42</sup> The “second week” consists of reflection on “The Call of Christ” and

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<sup>37</sup> For support for this proposal see David Lonsdale, “Discernment,” in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 248.

<sup>38</sup> Ignatius of Loyola, *A Pilgrim’s Journey: The Autobiography of Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. Joseph N. Tylenda S.J. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 14-15.

<sup>39</sup> Loyola, *A Pilgrim’s Journey*, 14-15.

<sup>40</sup> When the exercises are conducted over an extended period in daily life, the weeks refer more to periods of time rather than to a specific 7 day week.

<sup>41</sup> For a reflection on the notion of a self divided within itself by sin, see Erhard Kunz, “The Divided Self, the Encounter with Christ, and the Journey of Commitment,” *The Way* 44, no. 4 (2005): 131-145.

<sup>42</sup> David L. Fleming, ed., *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: A Literal Translation and a Contemporary Reading* (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1978), §10. Ignatius is here implicitly referring to the Bonaventurian notion of the three “ways” of the spiritual journey to God, the purgative, illuminative and unitive ways. For the

hence draws participants into the “illuminative life,” which engenders an experience of greater intimacy with Christ.<sup>43</sup> Meditations on the passion constitute the “third week” while in the “fourth week” retreatants contemplate the resurrection and the love of God.

The whole process prepares retreatants to make a choice concerning the matters under consideration. Ignatius expanded the arena concerning the types of choices open to a discerning believer. With Ignatius, the choice or “election” was no longer merely between a religious or secular state in life.<sup>44</sup> Ignatius recognised that the Holy Spirit could assist in all manner of decision-making in ordinary life. The *Exercises* could help with the choice of a profession or whether or not to invest in a new possession.<sup>45</sup> In its capacity for general application to a wide range of Christian states of life, Ignatian spirituality provides theoretical as well as practical guidelines for the non-monastic spiritual world and it continues to inspire contemporary thinking on vocation and discernment.<sup>46</sup> Recent approaches, many of them influenced by Ignatius, tend to emphasise the overall goal of holiness and union with God rather than the endeavour to discover a specific state within which to live one’s life. Like Ignatius, they tend to emphasise the dynamic inherent in discovering one’s vocation.

### 3. Some Contemporary Approaches to Vocation

Current approaches to the question of vocation emphasise being rather than doing. No longer does one have a vocation; rather, one’s life is a vocation, a vocation lived in

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observation that Bonaventure (d.1274) introduced these three categories, which have become the “classical spiritual itinerary,” see David Perrin, “Purgative Way,” in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 517.

<sup>43</sup> Fleming, ed., *Spiritual Exercises*, §10. For discussions of the illuminative and unitive ways, see David Perrin, “Illuminative Way,” in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 356-358; David Perrin, “Unitive Way,” in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 629-630.

<sup>44</sup> The terms “choice” and “election” appear to be synonymous for Ignatius.

<sup>45</sup> Fleming, ed., *Spiritual Exercises*, §171.

<sup>46</sup> See Lonsdale, “Discernment,” 248.

mysterious intimacy with the ultimate mystery of God. In this vocational context one's interior life must find an authentic exterior expression. Hence, among the numerous themes that coalesce in thinking on vocation over the last two or three decades, perhaps the most prominent is that of the need for congruence between one's interiority and its external expression in vocation. The second is the call for an awareness that one's capacities and graces are all a gift from God. Both themes require a heightened sense of inner experience. In other words, there is implicit in both these themes the need for an attentive and faith-filled receptivity to the movements of interiority. The following writers exemplify these different emphases.

Frederick Buechner, a Presbyterian minister and American author writing in the mid-twentieth century, observes, "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."<sup>47</sup> Citing Buechner, Gordon Smith recommends the development of vocational integrity wherein there is a congruence between who we are and the unique way in which God wants us to express our love for both God and our neighbour.<sup>48</sup> Such authentic expression will be the outcome of the discovery of the gifts and graces God has given us.

Pertinent to our considerations is Smith's identification of three notions of vocation. The first is our foundational calling as Christians. The third is the particular, present and often temporary tasks that our everyday responsibilities demand of us. The second is the notion with which he is concerned. In contrast to the first, general vocation and the third, very specific vocation in which people attend to their daily tasks, there is the vocation to love God and neighbour in the unique way that God has determined for each person. Such a vocation does not disappear when role or job or occupation disappear; it remains. People may not identify their vocations until they are free from the jobs that have occupied them

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<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Holder, "Vocation," 639.

<sup>48</sup> Gordon Smith, *Courage and Calling: Embracing Your God-Given Potential* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 33.

throughout their working life. They may only identify their vocation at retirement. That identification will occur through a process of discernment and attentiveness to interiority.<sup>49</sup>

Smith speaks of attentiveness to our “heart” and to our “core.”<sup>50</sup> Such terms are frequently used in the literature on vocation. Mary Frohlich, for example, like Buechner and Smith, reflects on the effect of congruence between the self and its life expression.<sup>51</sup> Frohlich notes the “core sense of rightness and joy” that accompanies identifying a particular, concrete expression for one’s life.<sup>52</sup> Buechner, Smith and Frohlich emphasise both the identification of a call for one’s life and also the experience that accompanies such identification. They point to the joy derived from living a life conformed to the love of God and service of one’s neighbour.<sup>53</sup> They recognise the need for congruence between our deepest desires to serve and the identification of an appropriate historical context for that service. In so doing, these writers recognise the value of attending to our inner experience. Frohlich identifies different strands that contribute to interior experience. Both reflection upon historical events in the context of a faith tradition and one’s personal memory influence the considerations of one seeking to identify a vocation.<sup>54</sup> Openness to interiority is, however, at the “root” of vocation since it yields an awareness of peace and joy.<sup>55</sup> Such experiences ultimately confer the capacity for the judgement that one’s decision for a particular vocational pursuit is correct.

Schuurman is another who recognises that both personal experience and reflection on one’s theological tradition contribute to the identification of vocation. People of faith interpret

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<sup>49</sup> Smith, *Courage and Calling*, 33-35.

<sup>50</sup> Smith, *Courage and Calling*, 55.

<sup>51</sup> Mary Frohlich, “Thérèse of Lisieux and Jeanne d’Arc: History, Memory, and Interiority in the Experience of Vocation,” *Spiritus: a Journal of Christian Spirituality* 6, no. 2 (2006): 173-194.

<sup>52</sup> Frohlich, “Thérèse of Lisieux and Jeanne d’Arc,” 174.

<sup>53</sup> For a consideration of the contemplative relationship with God as foundational for such service, see Meredith Secomb, “Love of God and Love of Neighbour: The Contemplative Foundation for Social Action,” *Aggiornamento: Journal of the Institute for Religious and Pastoral Studies*, no. 1 (2006), <http://www.udallas.edu/ministry/agg/ejournals.cfm> (accessed March 13, 2009).

<sup>54</sup> Frohlich, “Thérèse of Lisieux and Jeanne d’Arc,” 173.

<sup>55</sup> Frohlich, “Thérèse of Lisieux and Jeanne d’Arc,” 174.



their experiences through the “lens of faith.” The experiential and theological dimensions thereby coalesce in the impression of being called.<sup>56</sup> Like Buechner and Smith, Schuurman also urges the awareness that our lives are “given” to us.<sup>57</sup> In such awareness, we further the capacity for abandonment and surrender in faith.

Ultimately that to which we surrender is mystery. For Guinness mystery is at the “heart” of both our calling and our identity.<sup>58</sup> There is a mysterious dimension that is “deeper, wider, higher, and longer” than the expression of our vocation.<sup>59</sup> Hence, finding one’s vocation is not only about finding the unique life expression to which God calls one; it is also about finding one’s very self. The Quaker and American activist, Parker Palmer, reflects, “What a long time it can take to become the person one has always been!”<sup>60</sup> He laments the masks which we adopt in the absence of the experience of an authentic centre. The masks to which he refers develop from our pursuit of an ideal self. Such inauthentic ideals evolve from our attempt to imitate those around us, whether immediate to us or historically present to us through our tradition, rather than through the authentic pursuit of our unique vocational expression.

The “deep gladness” of which Buechner speaks and the “core sense of rightness and joy” of which Frohlich speaks derive in part from the discovery of the “true self . . . that is the seed of authentic vocation.”<sup>61</sup> That discovery arises from being attentive to our interiority and by learning to accept the mystery that is foundational to our being. It arises from the awareness that our self and the expression of that self in vocation are gift. Accordingly, we will discover

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<sup>56</sup> Douglas James Schuurman, *Vocation: Discerning Our Callings in Life* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2004), 49.

<sup>57</sup> Schuurman, *Vocation: Discerning Our Callings in Life*, 119.

<sup>58</sup> Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* (Nashville, Tennessee: W Publishing Group, 1998), 231.

<sup>59</sup> Guinness, *The Call*, 230.

<sup>60</sup> Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 9.

<sup>61</sup> Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*, 9.

our vocation not by attending to patterns of living external to us. Rather, we will discover it through attending to an internal “voice.”<sup>62</sup>

Palmer charts in simple terms the path of transformation that yields congruence between the inner and outer lives.<sup>63</sup> It is through a dark period of withdrawal wherein one painfully loses one’s identification with the masks that are generated by the ego’s need to conform to an ideal self. It leads into a new freedom and capacity to serve the community.<sup>64</sup> Mystics throughout the ages have attested to this pattern in the spiritual life wherein death to the self that one has known yields renewed life.<sup>65</sup> Jesus Christ referred to the process in these terms: “[T]hose who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it” (Matt 16:25). Jesus thereby observed that a readiness to lose one’s egocentric life for his sake yields a transformed life. While the loss of the life one has known is painful and disorienting, ultimately it leads to a life that transcends egocentric inhibitions and offers a new experience of joy and freedom in the kingdom of God.

Another theme present in contemporary approaches to vocation is its journey character. Approaches in previous centuries tended to focus on the importance of a particular decision at a particular time. In contrast, contemporary thought recognises that the decisive moment of decision-making is the fruit of a continuing process of discernment that occurs throughout life.<sup>66</sup> While the journey continues and the Christian has found the “Way” of Christ, he or she has not yet finally arrived.<sup>67</sup> There is, therefore, a constant interplay between journeying and arriving; arrival at one point means departure for the next. From this point of view, learning the skill of exercising ongoing attentive receptivity to the manifold ways in which God’s

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<sup>62</sup> Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*, 10.

<sup>63</sup> Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*, 37.

<sup>64</sup> Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*, 73ff.

<sup>65</sup> See, for example, St. John of the Cross, *The Collected Works of St John of the Cross*, ed. Kieran Kavanagh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1979).

<sup>66</sup> Rowan Williams, cited in Mark A. McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth: The Spirituality and Theology of Knowledge* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2004), 150.

<sup>67</sup> Guinness, *The Call*, 228.

grace manifests itself is a necessary dimension of surrender to mystery. A more explanatory account of how such receptivity can be developed would aid this endeavour. We will return to this issue later.

While these contemporary works are impressive in their common emphasis on the value of attending to the “heart” in discerning one’s vocation, they do not adequately explain the dynamics of interiority operative in this exercise. Nor do they provide a philosophical and theological foundation for the very possibility of so doing. They are descriptive, rather than explanatory. That is, they describe phenomena in relationship to the subject, rather than providing explanatory terms and relations that are independent of the subject. There are scholarly works that do attempt such explanatory accounts and that warrant consideration.

The two theologians who particularly inform my work, Hans Urs von Balthasar and Bernard Lonergan, were both formed by the Ignatian tradition. They have made major contributions to theological reflection and have also inspired significant reflection among subsequent thinkers. For instance, the lens that Jesuit priest, John Haughey, uses to edit his reflections on vocation is that of Lonergan’s notion of conversion.<sup>68</sup> The Jesuit and psychiatrist, Luigi Rulla, bases his comprehensive and still highly pertinent study of the dynamics of vocation on Lonergan’s notion of self-transcending intentional consciousness.<sup>69</sup> Given Rulla’s incorporation of both spiritual and psychological dynamics in his reflection, his work is particularly valuable for my own reflections and worthy of further probing.

For Rulla, as for more recent writers I have considered, the vocational process is a journey initiated by the mystery of God’s gift.<sup>70</sup> Rulla situates the Christian vocation within the covenantal relationship with God. He cites Jeremiah 31:31 and Ezekiel 36:26 wherein the relationship that God establishes with the houses of Israel and Judah creates a “new heart”

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<sup>68</sup> John C. Haughey, “The Three Conversions Embedded In Personal Calling,” in *Revisiting the Idea of Vocation: Theological Explorations* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 1.

<sup>69</sup> See Luigi M. Rulla, *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation: Interdisciplinary Bases* vol. 1 (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1986); Luigi M. Rulla, J. Ridick, and F. Imoda, *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation: Existential Confirmation*, vol. 2 (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1989).

<sup>70</sup> Rulla, *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation* 1, 337.

and a “new spirit.” The “heart of stone” is removed and replaced by a “heart of flesh.” Such a relationship is gift, both from the point of view of God’s initiative and from the point of view of the human capacity to respond to the gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>71</sup> As such, it is ultimately a mystery. Since this relationship requires human cooperation, however, it is subject to scientific reflection on the elements of that cooperation and the factors that inhibit it. Rulla’s particular contribution to the field is to identify three dimensions or dispositions which either help or hinder cooperation with grace. Each dimension has two poles. Rulla considers that two dimensions, which can be readily articulated, are the virtue-sin dimension and the normality-pathology dimension. The third dimension is pertinent to the unconscious. In this context Rulla addresses the repression that can often accompany unconscious dynamics, even within the normal person.<sup>72</sup>

A corollary of the presence of repressed unconscious aspects of the human person is their expression in emotion. In other words, for Rulla repressed thoughts and feelings will find expression in emotion and in the images and symbols that frequently accompany emotions. Rulla distinguishes between the world of concepts and the world of images and symbols. The concept of a flower, for instance, has the same conceptual meaning for many different people. The image or symbol of a flower, however, will carry very different emotional meanings, depending on the types of affective memories associated with a flower in a person’s development. Similarly, human beings can elicit different emotional reactions according to the degree to which they remind observers of figures in their past. Attraction or repulsion may be generated through a totally unconscious connection derived from past circumstances.<sup>73</sup> This observation is pertinent to vocational choice, for a considered option may likewise generate attraction or repulsion because of experiences from the past. Only when those experiences are brought into awareness in the present will those reflecting on the options be able to make a choice in freedom.

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<sup>71</sup> Rulla, *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation* 1, 11.

<sup>72</sup> Rulla, *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation* 1, 85. Note that Robert Doran, also trained in psychological techniques and formed by Ignatian spirituality, has addressed this dimension more recently. I discuss his work in Chapter Six.

<sup>73</sup> Rulla, *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation* 1, 86.

Rulla rightly points to the importance of awareness of such emotional reactions for vocational exploration. As he emphasises, these reactions are pertinent to the spiritual journey. Rulla does not, however, specifically refer to the fact that implicit in these reactions is the dimension of bodily activity embedded in the emotion. Emotions comprise a somatic component as well as a mental and imaginative component. The emotions of attraction and repulsion, for example, are felt in the body at the same time as they generate images, thoughts and evaluations of the bodily sensations that accompany the emotion. The body has gained increasing recognition in spiritual reflection since Rulla's time. In keeping with this appreciation of the body, I wish in this study to highlight the embodied dimension of human engagement with spiritual dimensions in the pursuit of a vocation.

Rulla's observations, concerning repressed emotion and its effects on decision-making, point to an important practical implication for vocational choice. In pursuing a life that is obedient to God's leading, whether in a specific major life decision or in regular decision-making on a daily basis, discernment is essential. This raises the question of how one recognises God's will in a particular instance. The Christian tradition has given much attention to this question and we turn now to its consideration.

#### **4. Discernment in Scripture, Tradition and Contemporary Thinking**

The early Christians were exhorted to "test the spirits to see if they are from God" (1 Jn 4:1). Implicit in this exhortation is the understanding that influences for both good and ill are present in the world. Such influences affect not only individuals, but also communities, institutions and nations.<sup>74</sup> A tradition of discernment has grown out of this awareness. One commentator defines discernment as a "form of critical reflection on human and specifically religious experience, either of individuals or of a group or community."<sup>75</sup> Given our susceptibility to influence from without and within, and the difficulty we have in identifying whether those influences are for good or ill, we need strategies to help us recognise whether an influence is compatible with the movement of God within our lives. We can trace through

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<sup>74</sup> Lonsdale, "Discernment," 248.

<sup>75</sup> Lonsdale, "Discernment," 247.

history an increasing refinement of these strategies, which are necessary to provide a basis for the authentic decision-making and actions that may follow upon critical reflection on our experience.

Although unsystematised, the seeds of the discernment tradition are apparent in the Hebrew scriptures.<sup>76</sup> Moses' direction to "choose life" rather than death (Dt 30:19) is such an instance. Another is his instruction to discern between true and false prophets (Dt 18:22). The need for such discernment continued into Jesus' time and then into the early Church. Jesus cautioned against "false prophets," advising that they could be known by their fruits (Mt 7:16) and Paul elaborated on the nature of those fruits (Gal 5:16-26; 1 Cor 3:3). The ability to discern could be given either as a gift from God (1 Cor 12:10) or it could be developed much as any skill can be developed. The most comprehensive exploration of these scriptural dynamics has been provided by Ignatius of Loyola.

Ignatius remains the primary source for present-day Christian thinking on discernment.<sup>77</sup> As I noted earlier, Ignatius wrote the *Spiritual Exercises* after reflecting on the insights and understandings derived from meditating upon his experiences while he recovered from a wound to his leg.<sup>78</sup> He learnt to "discern the spirits moving him."<sup>79</sup> The term "spirits" has a technical meaning for Ignatius. It refers to our interior experiences, derived from either God, or from a spiritual realm antagonistic to God, or from ourselves.<sup>80</sup> All three sources can affect our intellectual, volitional and affective dimensions, each of which benefits from being submitted to discernment. Our thoughts, reasoning and imaginative capacities constitute

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<sup>76</sup> Lonsdale, "Discernment," 248.

<sup>77</sup> For a recent collection of reflections on Ignatius' thinking, see Anthony De Mello, *Seek God Everywhere: Reflections on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, ed. Gerald O'Collins, Daniel Kendall, and Jeffrey LaBelle (New York: Doubleday, 2010). Particularly pertinent to this study are the very accessible sections entitled "Elections – Making Life Decisions" and "Discernment of Spirits," for which see De Mello, *Seek God Everywhere*, 84-99, 100-137.

<sup>78</sup> Loyola, *A Pilgrim's Journey*, 9-15.

<sup>79</sup> See the note by the translator and interpreter, Joseph N. Tylenda S.J., Loyola, *A Pilgrim's Journey*, 14n18-19.

<sup>80</sup> McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth*, 91-92. For the observation that Ignatius took the term from scholasticism where it refers to our inner experiences, see George E. Ganss and Edward J. Malatesta, eds., *Ignatius of Loyola: Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*, The Classics of Western Spirituality (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1991), 388.

the intellectual dimension. Intentions towards, for example, love, hate, desire or fear constitute the volitional dimension. Feelings or impulses such as peace, warmth and consolation or coldness and desolation constitute the affective dimension.<sup>81</sup>

Ignatius taught his followers to distinguish between the actions of “good” and “bad” spirits. The impact of the different spirits is determined by the overall direction of a person’s life. The good spirit would assist a person growing in the love of God through feelings of encouragement, peace and consolation. In a person turning away from God, the same spirit would engender remorse, doubt and confusion. On the other hand, in the person desiring intimacy with God a bad spirit would engender distress and desolation, while for one who rejected God that spirit would elicit satisfaction and imagined pleasures.<sup>82</sup> Hence, for Ignatius discernment can only occur in what McIntosh refers to as the “hermeneutical frame” of an individual’s life and goals.<sup>83</sup> Some skill is therefore required in the development of a capacity for discernment.<sup>84</sup>

The spiritual diary of Ignatius of Loyola amply demonstrates that ongoing discernment of God’s will within the state of life that we have chosen is indeed possible.<sup>85</sup> Yet the highly discriminating discernment demonstrated in the diary only occurs after extensive personal transformation and training. Ignatius’ early methods of decision-making leave much to be desired, instanced by the occasion when he allowed a mule to make a decision for him.<sup>86</sup> In contrast, the fine nuances of his discernment in later life were the outcome of diligent

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<sup>81</sup> Ganss and Malatesta, eds., *Ignatius of Loyola: Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*, 388, 424.

<sup>82</sup> For Ignatius’ teaching on the different spirits and their respective influences in the first and second week of the exercises, see Fleming, ed., *Spiritual Exercises*, §§313-325, 328-335.

<sup>83</sup> McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth*, 92.

<sup>84</sup> For an extensive, but eminently accessible, discussion of the means for distinguishing between spirits, see McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth*, 91-124.

<sup>85</sup> For an instance of such discernment that reveals Ignatius’ attentive receptivity to the movements of his interiority, see his journal for Wednesday, March 12, 1544, in Ignatius of Loyola, *Personal Writings*, ed. Joseph A. Munitiz and Philip Endean, trans. Joseph A. Munitiz and Philip Endean (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1996), 97-99. For alerting me to the significance of this passage, I am indebted to Timothy M. Gallagher, *The Examen Prayer: Ignatian Wisdom for Our Lives Today* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2006), 42.

<sup>86</sup> Loyola, *A Pilgrim’s Journey*, n16.

attentiveness to interior spiritual movements over many years. He developed the *Spiritual Exercises* to assist others in the process of choosing between different options.

Ignatius identifies three possible “times” in which a choice can be made.<sup>87</sup> The first time is exemplified by the experiences of St. Matthew and St. Paul when, “without doubting, or being able to doubt,” they followed what they were shown.<sup>88</sup> The second time is when experiences of “light and knowledge” and of “consolations and desolations” repeatedly occur.”<sup>89</sup> In this type of choice, those attempting to discern God’s will experience a range of emotions and thoughts, some bringing peace and delight, others confusion and distraction. It often requires a director’s help to bring order and give meaning to the different experiences. In contrast, the third time is “quiet . . . when the soul is not acted on by various spirits, and uses its natural powers freely and tranquilly.”<sup>90</sup> It is not, however, a matter of merely thinking through the options. There is still an embodied “felt-sense” to the tranquillity that can accompany the non-discursive aspect of picturing oneself in the imagined situation.<sup>91</sup>

Ignatius considers that the second mode will be the norm and that, within that mode, there are two essential dimensions of the decision-making that leads to the choice between the various available options. The first dimension is indifference (*indiferencia*) to either of the choices: one should want only that which God wants.<sup>92</sup> The second dimension is the experience of the “consolation without previous cause” (*consolación sin causa precedente*).<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Fleming, ed., *Spiritual Exercises*, §§175-177.

<sup>88</sup> Fleming, ed., *Spiritual Exercises*, §175. See Mt 9:9, Acts 9:4-8.

<sup>89</sup> Fleming, ed., *Spiritual Exercises*, §176.

<sup>90</sup> Fleming, ed., *Spiritual Exercises*, §77.

<sup>91</sup> See Karl Rahner, “The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge in Ignatius of Loyola,” in *The Dynamic Element in the Church* (London: Burns & Oates, 1964), 161n143.

<sup>92</sup> Fleming, ed., *Spiritual Exercises*, §23.

<sup>93</sup> For this English rendering of the Spanish, see Harvey D. Egan, *The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Mystical Horizon*, Series IV: Study Aids on Jesuit Topics, vol. 5 (St. Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1976), 9n17.



This experience becomes the reference point for discerning different interior movements.<sup>94</sup> Hence, retreatants need to learn to pay attention to the movements of their consciousness as they reflect on possible choices.

Ignatius articulates the necessity for indifference in his presentation of the “Principle and Foundation” of the *Exercises*. He instructs that we must “make ourselves indifferent to all created things.” We are to desire “not health rather than sickness, riches rather than poverty, honour rather than dishonour, long rather than short life.”<sup>95</sup> Instead, we must desire and choose only that which contributes to the service of God. While any partiality of our own would obstruct our capacity to know God’s preference, indifference serves our capacity to know God’s preference.

The lack of such indifference will subject us to influence from “bad spirits.” It will subject us to influence from our own partialities or to inappropriate influence from others. On the other hand, the presence of indifference will open us to influence from the “good spirit.” It will open us to God’s gracious gift of God’s self and to the revelation of God’s specific will in this moment. God is able to move our will and put into our souls a capacity to know, desire and do that will.<sup>96</sup> God’s coming in this way is total gift and therefore it requires an inner receptivity on our part to appropriate it.<sup>97</sup>

For Ignatius the knowledge of God’s will derives from means other than the rational reflection that employs “general maxims of reason and faith” in the context of a specific life situation.<sup>98</sup> Nor is this other means merely the result of reflection on feelings and instincts. It is the outcome of reflection on a spiritual consolation that has no humanly conceived cause. Ignatius describes what he means by consolation:

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<sup>94</sup> Fleming, ed., *Spiritual Exercises*, §330.

<sup>95</sup> Fleming, ed., *Spiritual Exercises*, §23. See also Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Two Sisters in the Spirit: Thérèse of Lisieux and Elizabeth of the Trinity* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 302ff.

<sup>96</sup> Fleming, ed., *Spiritual Exercises*, §180.

<sup>97</sup> See Kunz, “The Divided Self,” 142.

<sup>98</sup> Rahner, “The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge,” 94.

I call it consolation when some interior movement in the soul is caused, through which the soul comes to be inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord; and when it can in consequence love no created thing on the face of the earth in itself, but in the Creator of them all.<sup>99</sup>

Hence, a consolation generates love for God and fervour for things of the spirit. Consolation, Ignatius affirms, is also present when there is an increase in the theological virtues of faith, hope and love and in the joy and peace accompanying attraction to “heavenly things.”<sup>100</sup> Ignatius applies the term “consolation without previous cause” to the occurrence of consolation in the absence of a considered meditation designed to arouse spiritual affectivity:

It belongs to God our Lord to give consolation to the soul without preceding cause . . . without any previous sense or knowledge of an object through which such consolation would come, through one’s acts of understanding and will.<sup>101</sup>

In other words, where a consoling experience occurs and we can attribute no interior work, or intentional activity, or exterior circumstance to its cause, Ignatius considers it to be a consolation without previous cause.<sup>102</sup> In the purity and simplicity of the experience of a consolation without previous cause, confirmation of God’s will is found.

There has been considerable reflection on Ignatius’ notion. While numerous accessible works present guidance for spiritual directors who seek to train others in principles of discernment, scholarly studies penetrate more fully the dynamics of discernment.<sup>103</sup> Karl

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<sup>99</sup> Fleming, ed., *Spiritual Exercises*, §316.

<sup>100</sup> Fleming, ed., *Spiritual Exercises*, §316.

<sup>101</sup> Fleming, ed., *Spiritual Exercises*, §330. For the reference to a similar dynamic wherein the experience is “given only to whom God wills to give it and often when the soul is least thinking of it,” see St. Teresa of Avila, “The Interior Castle,” in *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila* (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1980), §4.2.9.

<sup>102</sup> Note that Ignatius warns that, while there is no deceit in such a consolation, one must be alert to the possibility of deception in the after-glow of the period following, for which see Fleming, ed., *Spiritual Exercises*, §336.

<sup>103</sup> See, for example, William A. Barry, *Paying Attention to God: Discernment in Prayer* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1990); William A. Barry, *Spiritual Direction and the Encounter with God* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1992); Carthusian, *The Call of Silent Love: Vocation and Discernment* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1995); Thomas H. Green, *Weeds Among the Wheat. Discernment: Where Prayer & Action Meet* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1984); Eryn Huntington and Sherry Anne Weddell, *Discerning Charisms: A Workbook for Navigating the Discernment Process* (Colorado Springs: The Siena Institute Press, 2002); Robert F. Morneau, *Spiritual Direction* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1994); Lawrence Osborn, *Discernment*

Rahner in particular has addressed very comprehensively the possibility for knowing God's will through the adoption of Ignatian principles. We might ask how we can justify the concept of making a concrete choice within the will of God, rather than merely living a life conformed as much as possible to the abstract principles of virtue and conformity to the teachings of scripture and tradition. Karl Rahner explains the possibility for the existence of such "concrete individual knowledge" on the basis of his careful study of the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola.<sup>104</sup>

Rahner argues that the philosophy postulated by the *Exercises* recognises that the abstract principle of "the universal" is insufficient to determine human behaviour, for "unique" and "unrepeatable" experiences are also determinative.<sup>105</sup> Rahner justifies giving distinctly theological consideration to the Ignatian *Exercises*, which some might dismiss as merely common sense or pious spiritual material.<sup>106</sup> God is creative and works in history, incarnating that creativity concretely and not merely in abstract principles.<sup>107</sup> The *Spiritual Exercises* exemplify the very principle that Ignatius presents, namely that it is possible for human beings to make "concrete" choices, which uniquely incarnate God's will for their lives. In contrast to those who think that Rahner's approach to the *Exercises* is predominantly mystical, Rahner insists that the *Exercises* are a "compendium" of neither asceticism nor mysticism.<sup>108</sup> Rather, "the *Exercises* are guidance, regulations, instructions for something that is to be done" by exercitants, and the thing to be done is "to discover God's will."<sup>109</sup>

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(Cambridge: Grove Books, 1997); Marko Ivan Rupnik, *Discernment: Acquiring the Heart of God* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006).

<sup>104</sup> Rahner, "The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge," 84-170. Note that it is not only Ignatian spirituality that proposes such concrete knowledge. For the observation that Cistercians also speak of a "concrete spiritual ideal," see Merton, *The Sign of Jonas*, 144.

<sup>105</sup> Rahner, "The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge," 112.

<sup>106</sup> Rahner, "The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge," 84-85.

<sup>107</sup> Rahner, "The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge," 86-87.

<sup>108</sup> Rahner, "The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge," 89. Rahner has been identified somewhat simplistically as one who is an "heir" to the mystical tradition, at the cost of the appreciation of the dramatic in the *Spiritual Exercises*, for which see Werner Löser, "Hans Urs von Balthasar and Ignatius Loyola," *The Way* 44, no. 4 (2005): 116. In contrast, Löser unnecessarily identifies Balthasar with the dramatic at the expense of Balthasar's appreciation of the mystical.

<sup>109</sup> Rahner, "The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge," 89.

Certainly the approach to discovering the will of God, which the *Exercises* propose, is necessary because it is sometimes very difficult to determine the right thing to do. More importantly, however, the Ignatian approach is necessary because reason, as well as feelings and instincts, are frequently inadequate means for knowing that will. It is not that the *Exercises* ignore “the principles of general abstract ethics, of universal natural law, of the moral precepts of the gospel.” On the contrary, those principles contribute to the means of discovering the will of God in a particular situation.<sup>110</sup> They are, however, insufficient to establish “fully” the will of God in the here and now.<sup>111</sup> Rahner explains the dynamic that enables knowledge of God’s will:

[It is a] thoroughly intellectual operation of the “intellect,” in the metaphysical, scholastic sense of the word, in which it is capable of apprehending values. Only it is not cognition of the rationally discursive and conceptually expressible kind but an intellectual knowledge which is ultimately grounded in the simple presence to itself of the intrinsically intelligible subject which in the very accomplishment of its act has knowledge of itself, without that contrast of knower and known which holds when it is a question of those objects that are known by adverting to a context of sensory perception and imagery.<sup>112</sup>

I have given this long quotation in full because it contains numerous concepts that are pertinent to the whole of this study. Rahner here identifies values as an important component of decision-making. The apprehension of those values does not, however, occur through a cognitive means but through a subject’s awareness of “simple presence” to self. Moreover, such presence to self does not distinguish between subject and object, or between knower and known. Rather, in the very experience of self-awareness knowledge occurs. Hence, Rahner highlights a significant dimension of human consciousness, frequently overlooked in everyday functioning. It is the non-conceptual presence to self that accompanies all intentionality. The capacity to advert consciously to this dimension of

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<sup>110</sup> Rahner, “The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge,” 91.

<sup>111</sup> Rahner, “The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge,” 91.

<sup>112</sup> Rahner, “The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge,” 94-95n99.

interiority is essential for an “everyday mysticism” that is alert to God’s moment by moment calling.<sup>113</sup>

In an effort to explain this experience more fully, Harvey Egan, a student of Rahner, introduces the Thomist notion of the self-knowledge that accompanies a person’s knowing anything.<sup>114</sup> Just as a non-conceptual self-awareness occurs in everyday life, so attentiveness to God is often accompanied by the consolation without previous cause in a non-conceptual way. Hence, the consolation without previous cause can be experienced “anonymously as the mysticism of daily life.”<sup>115</sup> Egan extended Rahner’s discussion of the consolation without previous cause into an examination of the broader, “mystical horizon” of Ignatius, one aspect of which is particularly relevant for this study, namely the engagement between the mystery of humanity and that of God.<sup>116</sup> With Rahner, Egan argues that the consolation without previous cause is central to the Ignatian experience and that it demonstrates the integration of Ignatius’ anthropocentrism, christocentrism and mystagogy.<sup>117</sup> Through the *Exercises* and by grace our humanity and God’s mystery become linked.<sup>118</sup> Egan’s descriptive account of the dynamics of consciousness in an exercitant is both Christocentric and mystagogical. He speaks of exercitants “dying” to themselves as they take on the sentiments of Christ.<sup>119</sup> Egan claims that every Christian, regardless of the particular pattern of call, will find that identification with Christ crucified is foundational for a fulfilled Christian life.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Mark A. McIntosh, *Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 93.

<sup>114</sup> Egan, *The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Mystical Horizon*, 37.

<sup>115</sup> Egan, *The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Mystical Horizon*, 56.

<sup>116</sup> Egan, *The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Mystical Horizon*, 7-8.

<sup>117</sup> Egan, *The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Mystical Horizon*, 29ff.

<sup>118</sup> Egan, *The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Mystical Horizon*, 82.

<sup>119</sup> Egan, *The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Mystical Horizon*, 36. For the distinction between descriptive and explanatory accounts, see Lonergan, *Insight*, 291.

<sup>120</sup> See also Egan, *The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Mystical Horizon*, 37, 82.

The experience of dying to self can generate the existential crisis to which I referred in the previous chapter. While this experience is initially painful, faith-filled acceptance and surrender to the “loving Mystery” that calls exercitants beyond themselves issue ultimately in a transformation that brings about self-possession and an experience of unity and simplicity.<sup>121</sup> When such faith-filled surrender to mystery occurs, so too does the consolation without previous cause.<sup>122</sup> The capacity to notice and accept these phenomena requires heightened sensitivity to our interiority. Egan observes that Ignatius expected his exercitants to develop such self-awareness.<sup>123</sup> Contemporary thinking on vocation continues to call for self-knowledge.

There have been many others within the Christian tradition who have reflected on the notion of discernment.<sup>124</sup> David Lonsdale succinctly identifies a number of components that have become traditional in the Christian approach to discernment. Both affectivity and understanding are foundational, the former being submitted to the latter for “critical reflection.”<sup>125</sup> Secondly, given that the Christian’s task is to imitate Christ in his life, death and resurrection, the next foundational element of discernment is to “tune in to what the Spirit of Christ is doing and desires to do in the world.”<sup>126</sup> Hence, awareness of one’s social surroundings is important, for discerning action will always contribute to social justice and the betterment of one’s neighbour. The third dimension comprises appropriating Ignatius’ distinction between consolation and desolation in order to discriminate between affective

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<sup>121</sup> See Egan, *The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Mystical Horizon*, 37, 56-57, 66, 69.

<sup>122</sup> Egan, *The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Mystical Horizon*, 56.

<sup>123</sup> Egan, *The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Mystical Horizon*, 69.

<sup>124</sup> For the list of Origen (184-254), Cassian (c.360-435), Climacus (c. 579-649), Denis the Carthusian (c.1450), Bona (mid 17<sup>th</sup> century), Scaramelli (mid 18<sup>th</sup> century) and the *Philokalia*, see Lonsdale, “Discernment,” 248. For the addition of the desert fathers, Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), Richard of St. Victor (?-1173), Catherine of Siena (1347-1380), Jean Gerson (1363-1429), John Bunyan (1628-1688), Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), see McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth*, 43-81.

<sup>125</sup> Lonsdale, “Discernment,” 248.

<sup>126</sup> Lonsdale, “Discernment,” 248. Lonsdale does not elaborate on how this attunement occurs.

movements leading towards or away from God.<sup>127</sup> Clearly, a heightened awareness of interiority is essential.

Lonsdale's approach is fairly traditional in its delineation of the stages involved in discernment. Kees Waaijman, on the other hand, introduces his discussion of discernment with an interesting metaphor.<sup>128</sup> Waaijman considers the stages the moneychanger goes through to determine whether a coin is made of gold or not. There are two options; the coin will be either gold or brass. Similarly, scriptural wisdom spirituality and the prophetic traditions present two choices, the way of life or the way of death. Waaijman skilfully explores the ramifications of his metaphor for spiritual development. However, neither Lonsdale nor Waaijman convey the coherence and movement that Mark McIntosh, in an illuminating and insightful presentation, argues can occur in the course of growth in discernment.

McIntosh identifies a progressive pattern in the discernment process.<sup>129</sup> Considering the traditional approaches to be somewhat "mechanical," McIntosh sees a fluid movement occurring within discernment and articulates a five stage process.<sup>130</sup> First, discernment must be grounded in a faith-filled stance of love and trust in God. McIntosh develops this first point, explaining the link between discernment and a relationship with the trinitarian God. He draws on the work of Thomas Traherne to argue that a faith-filled, trusting relationship with God, and a corresponding participation in God's way of knowing and loving, enable us to perceive creation accurately and to cooperate with God's will for us in relationship with that creation.<sup>131</sup> Because our desires and impulses impede a clear perception of God's will, we must learn to distinguish between good and evil impulses.

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<sup>127</sup> Lonsdale, "Discernment," 249.

<sup>128</sup> Kees Waaijman, *Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods* (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 483-515.

<sup>129</sup> Kelly, *The Resurrection Effect*, 182n184.

<sup>130</sup> McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth*, 5-22.

<sup>131</sup> McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth*, 8-13. Cf. Ps. 19:1.

Such learning constitutes McIntosh's second moment, which encompasses the traditional distinction between the various impulses to action that Ignatius identified so well. Once such distinctions are made, the practitioner is then led to the third moment, namely the practice of discretion and practical wisdom. There is a common sense element to discernment in this stage wherein one prayerfully reflects on the best thing to do in the concrete circumstances of daily living. Fourthly, development in discernment entails a teleological dimension. One must have a sense of purpose and an awareness of the goal of being found doing that which Christ would have one do as one's life unfolds. Here a habit of "sensitivity" to God and a "desire to pursue God's will in all things" are primary.<sup>132</sup> Fifthly, discernment is also "illumination" and "contemplative wisdom." It is a relationship with God that informs and "irradiates" all knowledge of truth.<sup>133</sup> It thereby enables a "sense" for the right thing to be done, for in this stage "human life comes to share in God's own knowing and loving of reality."<sup>134</sup> McIntosh's first and last points enlarge the horizon of discernment in their suggestion that its development can contribute to enriching and illuminating one's contemplative relationship with God.

McIntosh's approach assumes a heightened sensitivity to the full range of human experience. McIntosh argues for the exercise of a discernment that starts from contemplative engagement with God, issues in praxis characterised by practical wisdom, and then returns to a contemplative stance accompanied by a connatural awareness of working with God in a union of contemplation and action.<sup>135</sup> Actions undertaken from this contemplative stance will be accompanied by the peace and rest of which the saints have spoken. Such functioning requires a high degree of attunement between one's own interiority in relationship with God and the needs manifest in the moment. The principles articulated by Ignatius and expounded by contemporary theologians assist our appreciation of how this interior awareness can develop. The following chapters enlarge upon the contribution of these theologians.

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<sup>132</sup> McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth*, 6.

<sup>133</sup> McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth*, 5.

<sup>134</sup> McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth*, 6.

<sup>135</sup> McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth*, 5.



## 5. Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter I have surveyed perspectives on vocation from scripture, tradition, Church teaching and more contemporary approaches. I have shown that there are numerous ways of understanding the concept of vocation. It was once understood as a call to convert to the Christian life. Later, on the one hand it became a more narrowly focused call to the priesthood or religious life, and on the other hand it assumed the Protestant understanding of a call to a particular work. More recently, Vatican II and papal statements have pointed to the Christian vocation as being a call to a life of holiness and to a life lived in truth and love. Regardless of the modes of expression, common to all is the sense of being called by a transcendent Someone or Something.

The notion of vocation is somewhat countercultural in its challenge to the popular idea that we are self-made people. The lack of a sense of vocation results in an aimlessness with a consequent demoralising effect. The failure to appreciate that there is One who calls, out of profound love, implies also a lack of humility and an egocentricity that is damaging to individuals and to the societies which they inhabit. The acceptance of vocation requires responding to an initiative from Another. It involves exposure to a mystery which is at the heart of both ourselves and our calling. Given that awareness of vocation or calling is grounded in the discovery of an authentic self, the latter is the “seed” of a vocation. Hence, the development of an authentic subjectivity, free from masks, is essential for the vocational discovery. Such development occurs over a life’s journey and is aided by attentiveness not only to the image- and symbol-making dimensions of the psyche but also to an awareness of embodied consciousness.

St. Ignatius of Loyola continues to exercise a major influence on present-day thought concerning vocation and discernment. Ignatius argues that it is possible to find God’s will in concrete circumstances of daily life and he identifies the experience of a consolation without previous cause as a pivotal means for discernment. Karl Rahner explains the consolation without previous cause as an experience of a non-conceptual “simple presence to self” and as a foundational dimension of the process of discernment. Harvey Egan points to the importance of faith-filled identification with Christ crucified and to an ongoing capacity to be

alert to the accompanying consolation without previous cause, which issues in a mysticism of daily life.

While the survey of vocation and discernment in scripture and tradition has given us a background for further reflection, it has not revealed why it is that the discovery of vocation satisfies the exigence for the resolution of profound existential questions. The answer can be found, I suggest, only by identifying more comprehensive philosophical and theological foundations for the vocational search. Hans Urs von Balthasar provides a solid experiential and theological basis for vocational reflection since he directly addresses the existential question “Who am I?” It is upon his work that I now reflect.

## CHAPTER 3

### VOCATION AND MISSION IN HANS URS VON BALTHASAR

In the previous chapter I reviewed the way in which scripture and tradition have contributed to our notion of vocation. In particular, I pointed to the influence of St. Ignatius of Loyola. While there have been many who have reflected on Ignatius' understanding of vocation and the discernment that must accompany it, I observed that there was an inadequate appreciation of why discovering one's vocation carried such existential significance. We move now to consider the work of the Ignatian-formed Hans Urs von Balthasar who addresses the existential import of vocation in the context of his overall theological programme.

I will present his approach in the following six sections:

1. Experience: The Foundation for a Vocation and a Theology
2. An Aesthetic Precondition and the Role of Faith
3. Self-Discovery through the Drama of Mission
4. From Eternal Election to Vocation and Mission
5. Mission: The Manifestation of the Person
6. Summary and Conclusion

#### 1. Experience: The Foundation of a Theology of Vocation

Foundational to Balthasar's programme is a capacity to attend to his own experience and to recognise God's call within that experience. Since many of the themes treated in Balthasar's discussion of vocation reflect his own experience, consideration of that experience is necessary before I elaborate on his theological perspective. Before doing so, it is worth reflecting on some methodological presuppositions that justify giving such weight to Hans Urs von Balthasar's personal experience. Balthasar acknowledges the problematic nature of the concept of experience in theological thought.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, he insists that the concept

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<sup>1</sup> Balthasar asks the question, "Can a Christian experience in himself the gracious presence of the Holy Spirit?" In so doing, he cites the instances of Montanism, Messalianism, the Reformation and Modernism as occasions

is “indispensable when faith is understood as the encounter of the whole person with God.”<sup>2</sup> It is not only the intellect, will and soul that respond to God in the experience of a faith encounter. For Balthasar the human body is also an integral part of that response, a point of significance for this study.

As a friend and colleague of Hans Urs von Balthasar, Angelo Scola knew him well. Scola observes that personal experience and theological reflection are intimately entwined for Balthasar.<sup>3</sup> The integration of faith and theological reflection ensures authenticity in a way not possible to a purported “objectivity” devoid of an experiential foundation. The saints achieve such integration, for implicit in their writings is a theological method appropriate to the material.<sup>4</sup> It is a method that is willing to give validity to profound meditation on scripture and faith-filled openness to the experiences and reflections such meditation generates.<sup>5</sup> Following Balthasar’s example, Scola writes somewhat dramatically of the interaction between spiritual experience and theological reflection:

Outside of the theologian’s free experience of rapture . . . there is no chance that his theology will acquire a form. . . . [T]he apex of the form is well beyond the worldly stylistic means. . . . [T]heology itself is “an active-passive radiance of the divine glory from the form of revelation.”<sup>6</sup>

With Balthasar, Scola insists that only intimate relationship with God in Jesus Christ will issue in a form of theology that legitimately reveals its subject matter. Receptivity to divine radiance derives only from a habit of prayer. Indeed, prayerful reflection on the mysteries of

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where the concept of experience in Catholic theology has been fraught, for which see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic: Theological Logical Theory: The Spirit of Truth*, trans. Adrian J. Walker, vol. 3 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 379-380. For a further examination of what Balthasar means by experience, see Christophe Potworowski, “Christian Experience in Hans Urs von Balthasar,” *Communio* 20 (1993): 107-117.

<sup>2</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics: Seeing the Form*, vol. 1 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 219.

<sup>3</sup> Angelo Scola, *Hans Urs von Balthasar: A Theological Style* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 11.

<sup>4</sup> Scola, *Hans Urs von Balthasar*, 12.

<sup>5</sup> Such an approach has been called “postcritical.” It calls on the reader’s imagination and affectivity as a means to appreciate a concept. This requires conversion. For Dulles’ belief that Balthasar’s approach was postcritical, see Avery Dulles, *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2000), 5.

<sup>6</sup> Scola, *Hans Urs von Balthasar*, 3. Scola here cites Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics: Studies in Theological Style: Clerical Styles*, vol. 2 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1984), 28.

revelation is a “*realistic attitude*” from which the knowledge of theological mysteries derives.<sup>7</sup> Hence, for Balthasar contemplatively based experience is an essential component of theological reflection. Given Balthasar’s spiritual experience of calling, it is not surprising that his theological reflections should insist on the foundational role of experience in theological reflection. I move now to consider some particularly formative experiences.

Hans Urs von Balthasar was remarkably gifted. Henrici, his cousin, pithily observes, “For all of us, he was a little too great.”<sup>8</sup> Henrici refers to Balthasar’s extraordinary musical talents.<sup>9</sup> He speaks also of Balthasar’s literary accomplishments and of his “primary gift . . . a simple and straightforward faith.”<sup>10</sup> Yet there was another dimension to Balthasar’s giftedness, a dimension that is difficult to articulate. Given Balthasar’s subsequent theological output, we could refer to it as sensitivity to the aesthetic dimension of all goodness and truth. As a child, it manifested in his perfect pitch and capacity to memorise all of Mozart’s works and in his experience of the “stunningly beautiful” mass in the local Jesuit Church.<sup>11</sup> As a mature theologian, it manifested in his emphasis upon the transcendental of beauty in the first seven volumes of his trilogy.<sup>12</sup> As a young adult considering where God was calling him, it manifested in an attentive receptivity to God’s movements in his soul, as is exemplified by his spiritual experience on a retreat.

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<sup>7</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, “Theology and Sanctity,” in *Explorations in Theology I: The Word Made Flesh* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 206-207. Emphasis original. For Balthasar’s endorsement of Irenaeus’ belief that theology, even more than philosophy, must be dedicated to reality, see Balthasar, *Glory 2*, 45.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Henrici, “Hans Urs von Balthasar: A Sketch of His Life,” in *Hans Urs von Balthasar: His Life and Work*, ed. D.L. Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 7.

<sup>9</sup> Balthasar speaks of being overwhelmed by the musical impressions made by various pieces of classical music at the ages of five and eight, for which see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Our Task: a Report and a Plan* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 36.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Henrici, “A Sketch of His Life,” 7-11. For Balthasar’s observation that his faith was “straightforward, untroubled by doubt,” see Balthasar, *Our Task*, 35.

<sup>11</sup> Balthasar, *Our Task*, 35; Henrici, “A Sketch of His Life,” 8-9.

<sup>12</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar’s trilogy comprises, in the English version, the seven volume *Glory of the Lord*, the five volume *Theo-Drama*, and the three volume *Theo-Logic*. In the original German, these works are rendered: *Herrlichkeit*, *Theodramatik*, *Theologik*.

In 1927, on a thirty-day Ignatian retreat for lay people, Balthasar had a dramatic experience of being called.<sup>13</sup> Responding to an invitation to speak about his vocation thirty-four years later, Balthasar commented that “I could still go to that remote path in the Black Forest . . . and find again the tree beneath which I was struck as by lightning.”<sup>14</sup> He refers again to the “lightning flash of vocation” in the report on his work with his spiritual colleague, Adrienne von Speyr.<sup>15</sup> For Balthasar the experience summoned him into his vocation.

Balthasar’s reflections convey the penetrating, transformative nature of his experience:

[Y]ou have nothing to choose, you have been called. You will not serve, you will be taken into service. You have no plans to make, you are just a little stone in a mosaic which has long been ready. All I needed to do was to “leave everything and follow,” without making plans, without wishes or insights. All I needed to do was to stand there and wait and see what I would be needed for.<sup>16</sup>

Exemplified in this passage is the sense of receptivity and Marian abandonment that Balthasar subsequently emphasised in his theological writings.<sup>17</sup> Reflecting on the effect of being enraptured, for example, Balthasar later observed that the crucial requirement in such an event is that of handing oneself over to the “deciding reality.”<sup>18</sup> Balthasar’s life exemplified such “handing over.” His very existence was offered to God in service.<sup>19</sup> He did not yet know the specific form that service would assume; he did not yet know the specific tasks he would have to undertake. In other words, he did not yet know his “mission,” which,

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<sup>13</sup> Balthasar would have been only 22 years of age at the time. The retreat was for lay people, for which see Balthasar, *Our Task*, 35.

<sup>14</sup> See Hans Urs von Balthasar, “*Pourquoi je me suis fait prêtre. Témoignages recueillis par Jorge et Ramón Sans Vila.*” Quoted in Henrici, “A Sketch of His Life,” 11. See also Scola, *Hans Urs von Balthasar*, 9. The invitation was issued by Pope John Paul II, for which see Scola, *Hans Urs von Balthasar*, x.

<sup>15</sup> Balthasar, *Our Task*, 37.

<sup>16</sup> Balthasar, quoted in Henrici, “A Sketch of His Life,” 11.

<sup>17</sup> For the observation that the anthropology Balthasar later articulated is literally “pre-programmed in his own biography,” see Johann G. Roten, “Hans Urs von Balthasar’s Anthropology in Light of His Marian Thinking,” *Communio* 20 (1993): 306.

<sup>18</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 2, 31.

<sup>19</sup> For the idea of “existence as vocation” and for its particular expression in Balthasar’s being “taken into service,” see Scola, *Hans Urs von Balthasar*, 11, 13.

for Balthasar, is a specific, concrete, historical expression of vocation. He knew only that God had called him and that he had simply to “wait and see.”

Reflecting upon Balthasar’s experience and his life’s work, Angelo Scola refers to the childlike faith that Balthasar’s description of his experience conveys and points to the Ignatian *indiferencia* that Balthasar’s subsequent responsiveness to numerous and varied demands demonstrated.<sup>20</sup> Yet Balthasar’s abandonment to that which was presented to him was not passive; it was an attentive availability and faith-filled readiness to follow. It was the outcome of his conviction that he had been taken into service. Using the terminology Balthasar was later to articulate in his theodramatic works, Balthasar had been “elected” and called by God. This had been, to use Ignatian categories, a “first time” election wherein God had so attracted Balthasar’s will that he could follow without doubting.<sup>21</sup> Like Paul, he had experienced the “weight of God’s take-over” on his freedom. Yet paradoxically, and again like Paul, he was subsequently to discover a “boundless” freedom as he pursued his mission in obedience to that original call.<sup>22</sup> This is the freedom of the saints whose experience constantly informed Balthasar in his theological reflections.

The experience in the Black Forest influenced the rest of Balthasar’s life. In the absence of other obvious alternatives, he decided to enter the Society of Jesus once he had completed his studies. He remained in the Society for twenty years before making the painful decision to leave the Order. He left not because he rejected its charism. On the contrary, it was because he had heard another call and in following it believed he was being utterly true to the spirit of Ignatius.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, in leaving the Order that he loved, Balthasar demonstrates

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<sup>20</sup> Scola, *Hans Urs von Balthasar*, 10-11. Note that in so doing Scola uses the terms “vocation” and “call” synonymously.

<sup>21</sup> Fleming, ed., *Spiritual Exercises*, §175. See also Henrici, “A Sketch of His Life,” 11.

<sup>22</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory: Dramatis Personae: Persons in Christ*, vol. 3 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 266. Balthasar cites Paul’s experience (1 Cor 9:16): “[I]f I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!”

<sup>23</sup> Henri de Lubac called Balthasar a “fervent disciple” of St. Ignatius, for which see Werner Löser, “The Ignatian Exercises in the Work of Hans Urs von Balthasar,” in *Hans Urs von Balthasar: His Life and Work*, ed. D.L. Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 103n101. For Balthasar’s observation that “the mission of St. Ignatius would perhaps be more important than remaining in the Society,” see Balthasar, *Our Task*, 19.

the radical and demanding nature of responsiveness to the unique will of God for one's life.<sup>24</sup> As Balthasar himself observed, the wrestle in discerning whether to go or stay trained him in detachment. In the end, the correct decision was "overwhelmingly clear."<sup>25</sup> He knew he had to leave. In Balthasar's readiness to be "taken into service" and to be led in directions that would subject him to severe criticism, Balthasar demonstrated that his whole existence had been surrendered to the transforming will of God.<sup>26</sup> His abandonment to God's leading took him in directions he could not have foreseen. It led him to an extraordinary mission with Adrienne von Speyr.

Balthasar insists that his work can not be separated from that of Adrienne von Speyr (1902-1967). Observing that there are many different types of missions within the Church, he comments he and von Speyr were called to a "double mission."<sup>27</sup> Whereas, for example, St. Paul, St. Augustine and St. Ignatius each had an individual mission, the missions of Balthasar and von Speyr complemented one another.<sup>28</sup> Balthasar endorses von Speyr's description of their "teamwork" as comprising "two halves of the moon."<sup>29</sup> Roten, adopting that phrase for the title of an essay, describes their relationship as one of "psychological and theological

<sup>24</sup> Balthasar considered the Order to be his "beloved homeland," for which see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *First Glance at Adrienne von Speyr* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981), 43. See also Balthasar, *Our Task*, 19.

<sup>25</sup> Balthasar, *Our Task*, 19, 79. For the observation that Bernard Lonergan also wrestled with the reconciliation of obedience and initiative within the Society of Jesus, see Bernard J. F. Lonergan, "Insight Revisited," in *A Second Collection: Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J.*, ed. William F. J. Ryan and Bernard J. Tyrrell (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 266.

<sup>26</sup> For Balthasar's observation that the superior of the house in which he was living subjected him to gossip concerning his relationship with Adrienne von Speyr, see Balthasar, *Our Task*, 79.

<sup>27</sup> Balthasar, *Our Task*, 16.

<sup>28</sup> For other instances of such "double missions" in the history of the Church, see for example Theresa of Avila and John of the Cross, Francis de Sales and Madame de Chantal. Hans Urs von Balthasar and Adrienne formed together the Community of St. John (*Johannes Gemeinschaft*), a secular lay institute. For the observation that Balthasar considered his work with the Community to have greater priority than this writing, and that it was in his work with the Community that he believed he was most serving the renewal of the Church, see Scola, *Hans Urs von Balthasar*, 14. Scola cites Hans Urs von Balthasar, *My Work: In Retrospect* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993).

<sup>29</sup> Balthasar, *Our Task*, 16. Balthasar here cites von Speyr. Balthasar attributes to von Speyr the "basic perspective" of *Herrlichkeit*, for which see Balthasar, *First Glance at Adrienne von Speyr*, 13. Elsewhere he observes that the "form" of which *Herrlichkeit* speaks derived from his insight into interconnections in all that he had been studying, for which see Balthasar, *Our Task*, 37.



symbiosis.”<sup>30</sup> In the intimate spiritual connectedness to which they were called, they developed views and perspectives that were mutually enriching and supportive.

Balthasar and von Speyr exemplify the way in which an extensive personal preparation for mission can precede its eventual outworking.<sup>31</sup> From birth Adrienne von Speyr had suffered the feeling of being rejected by her mother. It was a suffering that contributed to a profound interior life, marked by extraordinary spiritual phenomena. Alienated from her mother, she developed a growing connection with her physician father and desired to become a doctor in order to help others. Her medical studies were undertaken only with great difficulty and against her mother’s wishes, for the latter considered that such studies were inappropriate for a woman.<sup>32</sup> Though born a Protestant, Adrienne von Speyr spontaneously longed for a spiritual dimension that significant others around her recognised as Catholic.<sup>33</sup> Hence, when in 1940 she met Hans Urs von Balthasar, she embraced his instruction in the Catholic faith with “exuberant joy.”<sup>34</sup>

The formation of Hans Urs von Balthasar, on the other hand, was very different. He was born into a supportive patrician family that encouraged a solid faith. He was also extremely musically gifted and intellectually able. While studying literature, Balthasar benefited from the influence of the psychoanalyst, philosopher and theologian, Rudolf Allers, with whom he lived during his university days. Allers’ conviction that love and relationship were the

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<sup>30</sup> Johann Roten, “The Two Halves of the Moon: Marian Anthropological Dimensions in the Common Mission of Adrienne von Speyr and Hans Urs von Balthasar,” in *Hans Urs von Balthasar: His Life and Work*, ed. D.L. Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 66. Such intimacy was aided by the fact that Balthasar lived with Adrienne von Speyr and her husband, Werner Kaegi, for many years. Balthasar observes that “without the hospitality of Werner Kaegi, my work with A. ... would never have been possible,” for which see Balthasar, *Our Task*, 30n38.

<sup>31</sup> Balthasar, *First Glance at Adrienne von Speyr*, 11.

<sup>32</sup> For the observation that Catholic feminist spirituality would recognise such perseverance in “tasks outside the social structure” as typical of a leading by the Holy Spirit, see Rhonda Chervin, “Introduction,” in *They Followed His Call* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 9-10. I would point out that this pattern is present not only in the lives of women called by God but also in those of men.

<sup>33</sup> For example, she once wrote an essay whereupon her father observed, “A lot of this is very Catholic” and a friend thought she would eventually become a nun, for which see Balthasar, *Our Task*, 22-23.

<sup>34</sup> Balthasar, *First Glance at Adrienne von Speyr*, 12.

essential dimensions of human existence made an enduring impression upon Balthasar, influencing the latter's decision to study theology wherein he could explore God's loving relationship with humanity.<sup>35</sup>

Balthasar's erudition combined with his sensitive openness to beauty, goodness and truth served his work with Adrienne von Speyr. Each considered that the other contributed far more to the relationship. Balthasar comments, "I received far more from her, theologically, than she from me."<sup>36</sup> Von Speyr comments, "I owe you a thousand times more thanks than you do me."<sup>37</sup> Balthasar valued Adrienne's "highly original theology," embracing as it did so many different themes.<sup>38</sup> Behind many of the themes in Adrienne's theology was an attitude and way of being before God that concurred with Balthasar's. Adrienne von Speyr referred to it as a "confessional attitude."<sup>39</sup> Balthasar described it as "the permanent and fundamental openness of the whole soul to God."<sup>40</sup> The attitude is characterised by a "total self-dispossession" and by the "Marian consent" that permeates all von Speyr's thinking and derives from being freed from egocentricity.<sup>41</sup>

For Balthasar such an attitude enables attentive receptivity to the discernment of one's call, responsiveness to which is the "essence" of authentic Christian life.<sup>42</sup> Although each one will discover the unique expression of that call, for Balthasar every person has the

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<sup>35</sup> Balthasar, *Our Task*, 36; Henrici, "A Sketch of His Life," 10.

<sup>36</sup> Balthasar, *First Glance at Adrienne von Speyr*, 13.

<sup>37</sup> Balthasar, *Our Task*, 87.

<sup>38</sup> Balthasar, *Our Task*, 64.

<sup>39</sup> See Balthasar, *Our Task*, 27, 64.

<sup>40</sup> Balthasar, *Our Task*, 27.

<sup>41</sup> Balthasar, *Our Task*, 132, 150-156.

<sup>42</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life*, trans. Sr. Mary Frances McCarthy (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983), 391. This attitude was to inform the spirituality of all who participated in the Community of St. John that Balthasar and von Speyr jointly founded.

vocation to establish a “bridge” between people and God.<sup>43</sup> This bridge is built primarily through love. Indeed, for Balthasar, our primary call is to love. Balthasar observes, “We are here to love – to love God and to love our neighbour.”<sup>44</sup> He reflects on the nature of the love which we are called to express, a love that gives meaning and value to the commandments. Indeed, inasmuch as “love alone” is enough, for it is in love that our blessedness consists, a life lived in love is sufficient unto itself.<sup>45</sup>

While love is delighted to renounce all for the beloved, falling away from love has immense repercussions:

As love cools, the glowing lava of its immense spontaneity hardens into the fixed and narrow molds of individual commandments. “Where love grows sluggish, law flourishes.” . . . The more we remove ourselves from the innermost core of love, the more the commandment to love acquires for us a negative character and becomes a prohibition. In this way, the sweet inevitability of the lover’s free choice to love is transformed into the harsh compulsion of an obligation.<sup>46</sup>

Balthasar here conveys the dialectic between law and love, a love that does not do away with law but rather fulfils and goes beyond it. In the absence of love, laws appear harsh and our struggle to obey them commensurately increases. Balthasar observes, “The very structure of our ethics changes as we draw near to or away from love.”<sup>47</sup>

Balthasar does not elaborate on the intrapersonal dynamics that effect such a change in the “structure” of one’s ethics. He does not identify the causes for the very different effects of love and law on one’s decisions and actions. Adopting common sense and descriptive language, we could conceive of it as love drawing us from within, and law driving us from without. Love issues in spontaneous action because of the beauty of that which is so desired and valued. Law, on the other hand, issues in action only through the relative drudgery of

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<sup>43</sup> Balthasar, *Our Task*, 189. Note that Henri de Lubac similarly identifies the Christian task as both glorifying God and building up the Church, for which see Henri De Lubac, *Theology in History*, trans. Anne Englund Nash (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 28.

<sup>44</sup> Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life*, 27.

<sup>45</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Love Alone: The Way of Revelation* (London: Burns & Oates, 1968), 117-118.

<sup>46</sup> Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life*, 30-31.

<sup>47</sup> Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life*, 33.

considered reflection on the goodness and truth of that which is valued. There may be little accompanying desire if the beauty of the valued object is not yet apparent.

Balthasar's major contribution to theology was to rectify the omission of the transcendental of beauty in theological reflection. The implications for vocational choice are that the considered option must appear attractive if love is to lead, rather than law to drive. There are, then, aesthetic preconditions for the very possibility of the attunement to God that enables the expression of vocation. I turn now to consider these preconditions for the drama of vocational action.

## 2. An Aesthetic Precondition and the Role of Faith

For Balthasar aesthetics and drama are intimately entwined. While there is the prior aesthetic condition of being enraptured by the glory of the vision of God, such enrapturing cannot help but issue in a response.<sup>48</sup> As Balthasar observes, conversation must follow encounter.<sup>49</sup> The goodness inherent in beauty is not merely aesthetically contemplated or logically demonstrated; it demands expression through good acts.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, Balthasar would argue that we really only understand God's action in us through responding to God's initiative.<sup>51</sup> Mere reflection without embodied action is not enough. Only dramatic engagement between our finite freedom and God's infinite freedom will be existentially satisfying.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> For Balthasar's notion of a theological aesthetics derived from such a vision, see *The Glory of the Lord*. For a discussion of the freedom that ensues in response to seeing the form, see Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 2*, 28-29.

<sup>49</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 1*, 15.

<sup>50</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 1*, 19.

<sup>51</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 1*, 15. Balthasar cites Jn 7:17 in support of his argument: "Anyone who resolves to do the will of God will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own," for which see Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 1*, 20.

<sup>52</sup> For a similar, Lonerganian-influenced observation wherein our unlimited thrust for self-transcendence derives satisfaction through receiving the gift of God's love, see Rulla, *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation 1*, 259. For an extensive discussion of dramatic encounter in Balthasar, see Thomas G. Dalzell, *The Dramatic Encounter of Divine and Human Freedom in the Theology of Hans Urs Von Balthasar* (Berne: Peter Lang, 2000).

Before we can appreciate the drama of vocational expression in mission, we must first appreciate the motivating impact of encounter with God's "glory," the term Balthasar uses to render that which in an intra-mundane context is beautiful, but in an extra-mundane context is glorious. Though Balthasar acknowledges that glory cannot be defined, one facet of his project is to examine the glory of Christian revelation.<sup>53</sup> To this end, he constructs a transcendental aesthetic that places emphasis upon the transcendental value of beauty. For Balthasar it is only by acknowledging the transcendental of the beautiful that integration with the other transcendentals of goodness and truth can occur.

The notion of the transcendentals derives from a medieval understanding of metaphysics which embraced the origins of the world under the aspects of the true, the good and the beautiful.<sup>54</sup> Balthasar draws on Philip the Chancellor to explain that the transcendental properties of all that exists "transcend every species and belong to every existent as such."<sup>55</sup> The transcendental properties do not add anything to the object under consideration; rather, they are common to every category of existence.<sup>56</sup> Balthasar adopts the Thomist view that the transcendentals require cognitional activity for their appropriation. Hence, there is a "certain ambiguity" in the transcendentals for, while they are grounded in being, namely in all that is, they nevertheless depend upon the human subject for their appreciation.<sup>57</sup>

Balthasar focuses on three transcendentals: beauty, goodness and truth. In its appearing a particular being is beautiful, with the capacity to elicit wonder; therein is the transcendental of beauty. In its appearing a being also gives itself to us in a concrete fashion and hence is good; therein is the transcendental of goodness. In giving itself to us it reveals itself as true;

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<sup>53</sup> Balthasar, *Glory* 4, 11-12.

<sup>54</sup> Balthasar, *Glory* 4, 12. For the addition of the transcendental of "being," see Oliver Davies, "The Theological Aesthetics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. Edward T. Oakes and David Moss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 132. "Unity" is yet another transcendental commonly adjoined. For a succinct discussion of the scholastic use of the term "transcendental" see Francesca Aran Murphy, *Christ the Form of Beauty: A Study in Theology and Literature* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 216-217.

<sup>55</sup> Balthasar, *Glory* 4, 372.

<sup>56</sup> Davies, "Theological Aesthetics," 132.

<sup>57</sup> See Schindler, *The Dramatic Structure of Truth*, 350.

therein is the transcendental of truth.<sup>58</sup> These transcendentals cannot be separated from one another. They constitute a *circumincessio* with beauty dancing as an “uncontained splendour around the double constellation of the true and the good.”<sup>59</sup> In other words, when human beings are aware of an object and reflect upon that object, they can understand beauty, goodness and truth to be inherent in that object.

Influenced by Bonaventure, Balthasar conceives particular beings as “*expressions* . . . of the self revealing Ground of Being.”<sup>60</sup> Creation manifests the Creator through such expression, which can be perceived as glorious. For Balthasar beauty is a form from which light breaks and which thereby points to mystery inherent in the form. Drawing on Aquinas, Balthasar identifies two constituents of the beautiful: *species* and *lumen*. Balthasar translates them as *Gestalt* (form) and *Glanz* (splendour), which are considered in beauty to be one.<sup>61</sup> Because the form is more than the mere sum of its parts, the form both reveals mystery and also veils it.<sup>62</sup> The visible parts of a beautiful figure or form are united by what Balthasar refers to as the “manifestation of an inner core of being.” This “core” expresses itself externally as splendid.<sup>63</sup> Hence, the external manifestation is a revelation of non-manifested depth, revealing an inexhaustible dimension to be continually plumbed and providing thereby the quality of radiance, of mystery, of splendour and, in the case of things divine, of glory to the form.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> See Hans Urs von Balthasar, “A Résumé of My Thought,” in *Hans Urs von Balthasar: His Life and Work*, ed. D.L. Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 4. Note that this dynamic has epistemological implications, namely the need for relationship between both subject and object for the appropriation of truth, for which see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic: Theological Logical Theory: Truth of the World*, trans. Adrian J. Walker, vol. 1 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 35ff.

<sup>59</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 21, 18.

<sup>60</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 2*, 26. Emphasis original. The capitalised form, “Being,” is a technical term, an abstract concept for that which transcends all beings, for which see Schindler, *The Dramatic Structure of Truth*, 32n13.

<sup>61</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 19-20, 118, 151. Balthasar notes that the Latin *formosus* (beautiful) comes from *forma* (shape), for which see Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 19.

<sup>62</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 151.

<sup>63</sup> Michael Waldstein, “An Introduction to von Balthasar’s *The Glory of the Lord*,” *Communio* 14, no. 1 (1987): 18.

<sup>64</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 442.

With this manner of perceiving reality, for Balthasar everything becomes a "glasshouse, transparent and translucent to God's grace."<sup>65</sup> The eighteenth century American theologian, Jonathan Edwards, offers a moving example of the transformative effect of grace and the subsequent new vision of reality:

The appearance of everything was altered: there seemed to be, as it were, a calm, sweet cast, or appearance of divine glory, in almost everything. God's excellency, his wisdom, his purity and love, seemed to appear in everything; in the sun, moon and stars; in the clouds, and blue sky; in the grass, flowers, trees; in the water, and all nature.<sup>66</sup>

Certainly one could argue that such awareness is the provenance of the mystic whose eyes have been opened to the depths of divine glory mysteriously present in all creation. Nevertheless, the fact that graced formation is required to be attentive to this glory does not negate the fact that there exists such a reality.

Balthasar would suggest that the human person can similarly become transparent to God's grace as he or she grows in the capacity to be attuned to God. For the one who begins to see the beauty of God's call in Jesus Christ to a particular vocational expression, the possibility of surrendering to such a vision of reality is immensely appealing, and hence immensely motivating. Just as reality reveals God's grace, so the human person can become a form through which God's grace and glory also manifest. For Balthasar a human being must become a "mirror" for God by achieving the "transcendence and radiance" (*Transzendenz und Strahlung*) that reveal God's glory in created humanity.<sup>67</sup> The possibility for so doing is enabled by God's gracious presence that "fulfils the form" of each human person.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Roten, "The Two Halves of the Moon," 443.

<sup>66</sup> Jonathan Edwards, "Personal Narrative," in *A Jonathan Edwards Reader*, ed. John E. Smith, Harry S. Stout, and Kenneth P. Minkema (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 285. For alerting me to this work by Edwards, I am indebted to McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth*, 124.

<sup>67</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 22.

<sup>68</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 454.

This understanding of the interpenetration of form and beauty is particularly relevant for Balthasar's notion of person and vocation. Balthasar insists on the necessity of form for shaping the person.<sup>69</sup> He observes that the form frees people to pursue their "highest possibilities" without fear and uncertainty.<sup>70</sup> Given that the life-form (*Lebensform*) becomes the expression of a person's soul, Balthasar enquires, what is the person without this form?

For this is no extraneous form, but rather so intimate a one that it is greatly rewarding to identify oneself with it. Nor is it a forcibly imposed form, rather one which has been bestowed from within and has been freely chosen. Nor, finally is it an arbitrary form, rather that uniquely personal one which constitutes the very law of the individual.<sup>71</sup>

Here then, at the very beginning of his trilogy, Balthasar alludes to the unique vocation and mission that will provide the form whereby persons express themselves in freedom and without fear. Balthasar's theo-drama goes on to argue that the full revelation of God's glory within the human person will be found only by participating in Christ's mission.

While one's vocation provides the person's form, the discovery of that vocation in Christ first requires a capacity to perceive Christ's form. This is a capacity derived only from faith, which for Balthasar is first and foremost a theological act of perception.<sup>72</sup> Faith is the activity through which God can be perceived and which establishes within the mind, indeed within the whole person, a new manner of seeing and of responding. A plumbing of the depths of human experience through, for example, a Plotinian or Jungian method will not give access to the divine light, which is seen through faith in the objective form of Jesus Christ.<sup>73</sup> This is so because the light by which we see divine realities is the outcome of the radiance of an uncreated light coming from the interior of the form itself and also present within us.<sup>74</sup> The

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<sup>69</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 23.

<sup>70</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 23-24.

<sup>71</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 24. For the German (*keine fremde Form, sondern eine so intime, dass es lohnt, sich damit zu identifizieren, keine aufgezwungene, sondern eine von innen geschenkte und freigewählte, keine beliebige, sondern die einmalige persönliche, das individuelle Gesetz*), see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit: Eine theologische Ästhetik: Erster Band: Schau der Gestalt* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1961), 21-22.

<sup>72</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 155.

<sup>73</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 221-222.

<sup>74</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 215.



discovery of this light does not occur through participation in some formless infinitude. It is discovered only through the form of Christian revelation.<sup>75</sup>

For Balthasar the visible form of Jesus Christ is the appearance (*Erscheinung*) of an "invisible, unfathomable mystery," the mystery of the revelation of God's very depths, of God's light and love.<sup>76</sup> The perception of these mysteries requires the cultivation of a capacity to recognise value and quality; it requires the necessary existential prerequisites.<sup>77</sup> There is needed that "unity of imagination," which enables the New Testament images to reveal the *Ding an sich* of Jesus Christ.<sup>78</sup> It requires "spiritual culture (*Bildung*) – sensitivity to the meaning of images (*Bilder*), the capacity to read forms as wholes."<sup>79</sup> Such culture is not the provenance of the learned and erudite, but of those prepared to humble themselves before God in an attitude of receptive abandonment. Those prepared to surrender to, and be enraptured by, their awareness of the beauty seen in the form of Christ will find themselves in the process of being transformed and expropriated by the radiance of the light of Christ, a light that participates in the freedom of God.<sup>80</sup> Such a transformation yields an increasing correspondence with the form of Christ and thereby shapes the believer for mission.

Adopting Pseudo Dionysius' use of eros to describe the movement towards Christ, Balthasar insists that the eros of faith has a holistic character, being a movement of the whole person rather than the mere appropriation of propositions. The movement whereby a person is transported away from self and towards God is theological, rather than psychological. Only this movement will adequately support the outworking of vocation in mission. Sicari expresses well what such a transformative development means for the human person:

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<sup>75</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 160.

<sup>76</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 151, 157.

<sup>77</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 26, 481, 464.

<sup>78</sup> Aidan Nichols, *Say It is Pentecost: A Guide Through Balthasar's Logic* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001), 204.

<sup>79</sup> Nichols, *Say It is Pentecost*, 204.

<sup>80</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 158-159.

[A] "theological person" . . . is a person whose self-consciousness is fully impregnated, without any residual space, by a sense of a proper belonging to Christ and to his history. This belonging is not to a Christ reduced to a personality, or to an ideal, or an enunciator of values, or pretext for social causes but, to a risen Christ, a person living and precious, loved with all the force of one's being.<sup>81</sup>

Only a vital, living relationship with Jesus Christ can enable both the identification and preservation of an oftentimes demanding vocation. Such a relationship is nurtured and supported by intimacy with Christ's body, the Church. In Balthasar's view only through joyfully imbibing the life of the Church will a person pursuing God's call be able to stand in the face of confronting situations.<sup>82</sup> Union with both Christ and the Church is necessary to deal with the challenges of life, marred as it is by the sin which Ignatius' first week of the *Spiritual Exercises* addresses. Obstacles to discernment arise in the form of the difficulties of daily living, misguided illusions, false hopes, and from intrusions from self and others that are contrary to God's leading.<sup>83</sup> Only a life lived in Christ can separate the weeds from the wheat.<sup>84</sup>

A life lived as a "unity of person, vocation and mission" is necessary to give the confidence and capacity to "read" the form of Christ.<sup>85</sup> This unified life will yield an obedient receptivity that enables the call to be heard, for beauty has the capacity to lay claim to one's deepest interiority. The one who attends to that call thereby discovers a capacity to cooperate with Christ in the drama of mission. I turn now to reflect on the drama that, for Balthasar, is at the heart of history. Engagement in that drama through vocation and mission enables each one to discover who he or she is called to be.

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<sup>81</sup> Sicari, "Mission, Asceticism, Crisis," 339.

<sup>82</sup> Sicari, "Mission, Asceticism, Crisis," 340.

<sup>83</sup> Schindler, *The Dramatic Structure of Truth*, 328.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Mt 13:24-30. See also Green, *Weeds Among the Wheat*.

<sup>85</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 121-122, 432.

### 3. Self-Discovery through the Drama of Mission

Balthasar avers that at the heart of history is a drama that shapes human personal and social life.<sup>86</sup> It is the drama of God's engagement in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit with every individual. Since Christians are in Christ, they participate with Christ in the drama. For them it is a "drama of discipleship," involving spiritual warfare.<sup>87</sup> Balthasar points to Origen's appropriation of the Israelite wars and desert wanderings as a metaphor for Christian spiritual warfare. Just as in Augustine's *City of God* the battle occurs in the context of world history, so too the spiritual battle continues to have a social dimension with ramifications for the individual. Each individual must discover the particular contribution he or she is to make to the work of redemption. Following Ignatius, Balthasar argues that not only the ascetic or those called into the desert as monks but everyone led by the Spirit can be a "warrior of Christ."<sup>88</sup>

Balthasar deplores the way in which the dramatic dimension of Christian life has been moved to the spiritual domain, thereby marginalizing it from dogmatics.<sup>89</sup> Operating from an explicitly and unapologetically Christian world view, he insists that biblical revelation must provide the context for theological reflection on human existence.<sup>90</sup> He criticises those, such as Anselm, who have tried to reach unbelievers through arguments that do not derive from a sound Christocentric base.<sup>91</sup> God's engagement with all people must be the starting point for theological reflection. He insists, "First and foremost we must remember that – as theologians – our starting point is always the given relationship between God and man as set

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<sup>86</sup> While Balthasar refers to the social dimension of human activity throughout his works, for the objection that he does not adequately consider the social implications, see Dalzell, *Dramatic Encounter*, 253ff.

<sup>87</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 2, 164.

<sup>88</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 2, 168.

<sup>89</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 2, 166.

<sup>90</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 2, 9, 229.

<sup>91</sup> For Balthasar's objection to Anselm's attempt to develop a systematic soteriology "*remoto Christi*," see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory: The Action*, vol. 4 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 255.

forth in biblical revelation."<sup>92</sup> Hence, Balthasar draws on revelation to ground the possibility of dramatic action and engagement with God, along with its implications for personhood and self-discovery.<sup>93</sup>

Yet, while revelation is Balthasar's starting point, the theatre provides him with theological resources for the consideration of revelation, since theatre, Balthasar argues, facilitates both religious and theological interpretations of existence.<sup>94</sup> Balthasar supports his claim by citing, among others, Maximus the Confessor (580–662) who readily applied dramatic images to his theological analysis.<sup>95</sup> One dimension of Balthasar's discussion is particularly relevant for our purposes. It concerns the distinction he makes between the actor's 'I' and his or her allotted role. A well-played role requires of the actor a capacity to preserve his or her identity while at the same time being completely committed to the role. There is a real tension here, for while the 'I' and the role are not to be identified, nevertheless the 'I' does not stand detached behind a role, for the role does shape the "I." Moreover, each character is involved with others and adapted to others. In other words, an interpersonal and social dimension is operative within the play and only thereby is the full meaning of the role expressed.

These observations are immediately pertinent to the situation of the one called into a God-given mission. Here, too, there is a tension, for while the person and the role are not identified, there nevertheless must be a full ownership of the task assigned. Further, just as the character in the play only becomes fully delineated as the play progresses, so those called into mission only become fully themselves as they pursue their unique call. Through entering into the arena of divine action, and not through seeking some essentialist, static interiority, we find who we are and can then answer the question, "Who am I?" For

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<sup>92</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 2*, 229.

<sup>93</sup> Yet Balthasar's position is not fideist, for Balthasar argues that, through a "method of integration," Christianity integrates the maximum truth and therefore is able to reach the highest truth, for which see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Epilog* (Einsiedeln/Trier: Johannes Verlag, 1987), 11. Cited in Nichols, *Say It is Pentecost*, 197–201. This is not a simplistic solution. For Nichols rejection of the criticism that Balthasar's approach is fideist, see Aidan Nichols, "Balthasar's Aims in his Theological Aesthetics," in *Beyond the Blue Glass: Catholic Essays on Faith and Culture* (London: The Saint Austin Press, 2002), 94.

<sup>94</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 1*, 249.

<sup>95</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 1*, 249.

Balthasar this question arises through the experience of what has been referred to as a “divided self.”<sup>96</sup> This condition warrants further reflection.

There is, Balthasar observes, a duality of “‘being’ and ‘seeming’.”<sup>97</sup> Expressed differently, there is a disjunction between what I am in my inner reality and what I represent to the world.<sup>98</sup> This disjunction is clearly apparent in the theatre where the actor and the character played can be differentiated, for the actor plays a “role” with which he or she does not identify in ordinary life. Balthasar notes that mid-20th century psychology recognised the presence of this disjunction when it gave so much attention to the notion of “role.”<sup>99</sup> The contemplative tradition also recognises the disjunction between the true self and the presentation of that self. Indeed, contemplatives have grieved over the distinctions that exist not only between their social role and their essential being, but also between the qualities of their very personality and their essential being.<sup>100</sup>

The experience of such a disjunction frequently generates a question, “Who am I?” Balthasar explores the various ways in which humanity has addressed this question and concludes that only a biblical and trinitarian perspective is adequate to account for and resolve it.<sup>101</sup> The resolution derives from finding our unique personhood, which in turn is found by discovering the unique mission in Jesus Christ that God has assigned to us. The identity between Christ’s person and mission is an integral dimension of this resolution. To appreciate why Christ’s identity of person and mission is pertinent to the discovery of one’s personhood, we need a

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<sup>96</sup> Kunz, “The Divided Self,” 131-145.

<sup>97</sup> For Balthasar’s observation that it is only in Jesus Christ that this duality is overcome in his experienced identity of person and mission, see Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 1*, 646.

<sup>98</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 1*, 481.

<sup>99</sup> Balthasar cites Erving Goffman’s *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York, 1959). See Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 1*, 491.

<sup>100</sup> See for example the comments by the author of *The Epistle of Privy Counsel* in Anonymous, *The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works*, trans. Clifton Wolters (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), 184. The author laments the finding by contemplatives of their “being, squeezing in between [them] and God.”

<sup>101</sup> See Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 1*, 481-643.

greater insight into the mystery of Christ and its consequences for our incorporation into Christ.

The form of Jesus Christ discloses mystery; it is the revelation of God's light and love. On the one hand, this mystery is invisible and immeasurable; on the other hand, it is manifest in Jesus Christ.<sup>102</sup> Balthasar's understanding of Christ is not essentialist, derived merely from ontological and metaphysical speculation. Rather, insight into Christ's covert being derives from reflection on his overt function, characterised as it is by obedience and surrender to the Father's will.<sup>103</sup> Obediential, rather than ontological categories, more adequately describe Balthasar's insight into Christ.<sup>104</sup> Balthasar observes that Christ is not first a sign pointing to the truths of salvation history, nor does he merely indicate a transcendent reality beyond him.<sup>105</sup> He *is* that historical and transcendent reality. Christ is both from the Father and with the Father. The possibility of his being from, while remaining with, the Father lies in Christ's eternal predestination to the mission of divine-human reconciliation.<sup>106</sup> Christ's mission was not something he undertook at a particular point. His economic mission is rooted in a "primordial proceeding (*processio*) from God."<sup>107</sup> In Christ the *processio* is identical with the *missio*.<sup>108</sup> Balthasar draws on the trinitarian theory of Thomas Aquinas to elaborate. The Son, immanent within the Trinity but proceeding from the Father and therefore a "dialogue partner," is identical with the Christ sent into the world. Hence, Christ's very person is identical with his mission.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 151, 157.

<sup>103</sup> For an in depth discussion of an approach to Christ's covert being through reflection on his overt function, see Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 3*, 149ff. See also, Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life*, trans. Sr. Mary Frances McCarthy (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983), 187, 190.

<sup>104</sup> Mark A. McIntosh, *Christology from Within: Spirituality and the Incarnation in Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 5.

<sup>105</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 145-151.

<sup>106</sup> Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life*, 188.

<sup>107</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 3*, 154; Ben Quash, "The Theo-Drama," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 150.

<sup>108</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 1*, 646.

<sup>109</sup> For an extended discussion see Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 3*, 149-259.

In Christ “I” and role are perfectly identified. In contrast to the clear difference (except in pathological instances) between an actor’s role and his or her individuality off the stage, in the “drama of the God-Man . . . we find identity between the sublime actor and the role he has to play.”<sup>110</sup> The conflict between the experience of one’s deepest interiority and the experience of one’s exterior presentation, which, Balthasar argues, is inherent in all people, does not exist in Jesus Christ, for Christ receives his very self from the Father and fulfils his mission through constant and contemplatively receptive abandonment to the Father’s will for him.<sup>111</sup> Consequently, the more Christians are incorporated into Christ, the more they will increasingly experience a unification and integration of all dimensions of their being. The possibility for such integration relies on receptivity to the transformative impact of engagement with Christ. The dynamic of receptivity will be increasingly realised within the consciousness of the Christian who gazes on Christ because such receptivity is foundational to Christ in his relationship with the Father. Balthasar states that Jesus receives his self from the Father. He explains, “The Son’s form of existence . . . is the uninterrupted reception of everything that he is, of his very self, from the Father. It is indeed this receiving of himself which gives him his ‘I,’ his own inner dimension, his spontaneity, that sonship with which he can answer the Father in a reciprocal giving.”<sup>112</sup> Hence, receptivity is the foundation of Christ’s very being.

Christ’s reception of all that he is from the Father has ramifications also for all that he does; it has ramifications for his mission. Balthasar argues that mission was at the centre of Jesus’ consciousness.<sup>113</sup> There must have been an “intuitive” awareness which might be formulated as, “I am the one through whom the kingdom of God must and will come.”<sup>114</sup> Such awareness was not a mere “accidental development” of consciousness. Balthasar argues

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<sup>110</sup> Theodor Haecker, quoted in Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 1*, 646.

<sup>111</sup> Mark A. McIntosh, “Christology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 32. See Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 3*, 163-202.

<sup>112</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *A Theology of History* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 30.

<sup>113</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 3*, 163.

<sup>114</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 3*, 166.

there would have been sufficient experiential data to contribute to an understanding such that Jesus could make choices and decisions aligned with this awareness. This identification of personhood and mission in Christ, combined with his utter receptivity to the Father, has ramifications for Christ's moment by moment living. Given that his mission and his relationship with the Father are inseparable, the "Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing" (Jn 5:19f.)<sup>115</sup> Hence Jesus must, in every encounter in his life, discern the appropriate response. Since Balthasar considers our human form to derive from the incarnated Christ form, we too can analogously learn how to receive our self in each situation from Christ and, correspondingly, discern in each moment the appropriate course of action.<sup>116</sup>

In Jesus Christ God has approached our heart through sensory means, a phenomenon that no ontology could have predicted before the event, and a phenomenon with great pertinence to the value of receptivity in the spiritual life.<sup>117</sup> This approach in Christ occurs through the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity through whom all people are able to engage with the Father, as Christ did. Everyone is able to experience a unity of "being" and "seeming," for the Spirit is able to "close the tragic breach between person and role in mission."<sup>118</sup> Balthasar stresses the dual effect of the Holy Spirit. On the one hand, the Spirit establishes intimacy with God at the very depths and core of a person. On the other hand, the Spirit is the "socializing 'between,' rooting human fellowship in a (trinitarian) personal depth that cannot be realised by purely earthly means."<sup>119</sup>

Through relationship with God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, it is possible for conscious subjects to rise above their natural level to that of 'supernatural' persons.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 3, 169.

<sup>116</sup> Balthasar, *Glory* 1, 36.

<sup>117</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Presence and Thought: An Essay on the Religious Philosophy of Gregory of Nyssa*, trans. Mark Sebanc (San Francisco: Communio Books, 1995), 133.

<sup>118</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 1, 647.

<sup>119</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 1, 647.

<sup>120</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 3, 208.



Enabled by grace, human beings can work towards this state of increasing identity between selfhood and mission.<sup>121</sup> Such persons then become images of God, enabling conscious subjects to come to themselves and to recognise their own “idea,” an idea derived from the “primal Idea” (*Urdee*).<sup>122</sup> Here at last they attain an insight into their uniqueness in God and the work God has given them to do. Here at last they find fulfilment. For Balthasar the Word that became flesh is God’s “primal Idea” within which all the ideas of individual creatures are contained.<sup>123</sup> Enabled by grace, we are tasked with discovering and conforming ourselves to the unique “idea” God has for us. Our finite freedom must open itself to God’s infinite freedom. Such openness yields fulfilment when we know ourselves addressed by God and given a task which shares in the “total Idea” which is Christ.<sup>124</sup> Since it is only by pursuing Christ in discipleship that this discovery can occur, the life of Jesus Christ provides the pattern for our lives.

All human beings can be defined in reference to Christ and in reference to Christ’s universal mission.<sup>125</sup> This is so because Jesus Christ has “adopted human nature as a whole,” and consequently his atoning work affects all of human nature.<sup>126</sup> Hence, to the extent that human persons ground themselves in Christ, their person and mission will increasingly coincide also. As this occurs, there gradually dissipates the initial, strongly felt dichotomy between one’s interior experience and one’s exterior experience of engagement with the world, as persons find themselves more and more identified with Jesus Christ in the discovery of their mission in him. Balthasar identifies three moments in this journey towards self-surrender and abandonment to God in the service of humanity. They are election, vocation and mission, to a consideration of which we now turn.

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<sup>121</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 3, 271.

<sup>122</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 3, 208. For an extended discussion on “image and likeness” see Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 2, 316-334. For Balthasar’s observations about the primal idea, see Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 2, 302.

<sup>123</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 2, 302.

<sup>124</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 2, 308.

<sup>125</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 3, 203.

<sup>126</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 3, 203. For Balthasar’s discussion of Paul’s notion of being “*En Christōi*,” see Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 3, 245ff.

#### 4. From Eternal Election to Vocation and Mission

Balthasar distinguishes the moments of election, vocation and mission. Our election is a matter of God's having chosen, or elected, us in Christ from eternity, from "before the foundation of the world."<sup>127</sup> We, however, only become aware of our having been elected by God when that election places a divine constraint upon our sense of personal freedom.<sup>128</sup> It takes time before God's election manifests in our lives.<sup>129</sup> When it does manifest, as it did in Balthasar's experience in the Black Forest, it manifests as vocation, as a sense of calling.

Balthasar's experience accords with scripture. He lists an impressive array of people who, in the midst of living ordinary lives, had a vocation thrust upon them.<sup>130</sup> For each one the call was unexpected. Each one felt unsuited for it: Moses, Abraham, Samuel, David, the "barren women" — Sarah, Hannah, Elizabeth. Mary too felt unsuited for her role of mother of the Son of God. Balthasar observes that the tasks assigned are often difficult. The chosen one may waiver, instanced by Jonah. A vocation can be refused, instanced by Judas.<sup>131</sup> Usually, there is a preparatory period before expressing the vocation. Often people must "grow" into their vocation before it begins to take a concrete expression in tasks that comprise a "mission."<sup>132</sup> Hence, the particular expression in mission is not immediately apparent. So Paul, for instance, retired to Arabia after his dramatic conversion and only after three years submitted himself to the elders in Jerusalem (Gal 1:17-19). In the case of the collaboration between Balthasar and von Speyr, he was thirty-five and she thirty-eight before they met.

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<sup>127</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 2, 69; Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 3, 263. Note that Balthasar seems occasionally to refer to "election" synonymously with vocation or choosing. See, for example, his discussion of the second week of the Ignatian *Exercises*, where he observes, "Election means that a person ... chooses 'what God our Lord gives us to choose'" in Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics: The Realm of Metaphysics in the Modern Age*, vol. 5 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 105.

<sup>128</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 3, 265-266.

<sup>129</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 3, 265.

<sup>130</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 3, 263-265.

<sup>131</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 3, 266.

<sup>132</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 3, 267.

There is then a distinction between our eternal election by God, the subsequent call expressed in an awareness of vocation, and its ultimate expression in a unique, concrete mission. Becoming aware of God's election entails the experience of a divine constraint upon our sense of personal freedom. Balthasar refers to the experience of our freedom being "submerged under the weight of God's take-over," a dynamic that I now explore.<sup>133</sup>

Balthasar maintains that our freedom has the capacity to awaken to a call coming from a form which we perceive as beautiful. We can be receptive or otherwise to this call just as we can be receptive or otherwise to a work of art.<sup>134</sup> The consequences, however, of inattention to the divine form are far more dire. The rejection of this possible dialogue is a rejection of God's potentially transformative confrontation not only with one's own life but also with the lives of others:

[T]he blissful, gratis, shining-in-itself of the thing of beauty is not meant for individualistic enjoyment in the experimental retorts of aesthetic seclusion; on the contrary, it is meant to be the communication of a meaning with a view to meaning's totality; it is an invitation to universal communication and also, pre-eminently, to a shared humanity.<sup>135</sup>

The graced experience is meant for others; it is not intended for the individual alone. There is, then, value for both the person and the community in accepting a mission. Considering that we are formed through interpersonal engagement with others, the refusal to accept the call may severely threaten authentic human development.<sup>136</sup>

Balthasar reflects on the momentous nature of the encounter with God, describing it so vividly that it must surely reflect his own experience:

When a person is struck by something truly significant . . . an arrow pierces his heart, at his most personal level. The issue is one that concerns him. "You must change your life" . . . The man to whom this has happened is marked for life. He has trodden holy ground that is in the world but not of it; he cannot return to the purely

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<sup>133</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 3, 266.

<sup>134</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 2, 28-29.

<sup>135</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 2, 29-30.

<sup>136</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 3, 266.

worldly world. He bears the brand-mark of his encounter with beauty. . . . Being touched in this way is election.<sup>137</sup>

An encounter with transcendent beauty, with divine glory, transforms the person so engaged. The “brand-mark” is a consequence of the contact of divinity with humanity, impacting upon personal freedom. It has ramifications both for personal choice and for acting out those choices, because, as Balthasar insists, “no-one is enraptured without returning . . . with a personal mission.”<sup>138</sup>

The aesthetic dimension here gives way to an ethical imperative that requires a handing over of oneself to the “deciding reality.”<sup>139</sup> Indeed, for Balthasar, it is this handing over which is decisive. Obedient surrender eventually leads to the recognition of the particular way God is calling a human being to express his or her vocation in a specific mission. The mission will be the end result of practical experience gained after having received a vocation. It is this expression of a specific mission that thereby gives a sense of unique personhood.<sup>140</sup> Such profound experiences contribute to the expression of a particular life form, which Balthasar refers to as an “elected” state of life. He contrasts it with the “secular” state wherein most people live out their discipleship of Christ. Balthasar’s presentation of these two contexts for vocational expression, namely the elected and secular states, and the way in which Ignatius’ approach informs his considerations, merit further reflection.

For Ignatius of Loyola eternal happiness derives from fulfilling our end, namely the “praise, reverence and service of God.”<sup>141</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar endorses this approach. In his most comprehensive reflection on vocation, *The Christian State of Life*, Balthasar compares the traditional means to the pursuit of human happiness with that taken by Ignatius of Loyola. The classical approach taken by patristic and medieval spirituality, in its attempt to identify universal and permanent dynamics, sought to align our essence with God’s essence. Eternal

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<sup>137</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 2, 30-31.

<sup>138</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 2, 31.

<sup>139</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 2, 31.

<sup>140</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 3, 270.

<sup>141</sup> Fleming, ed., *Spiritual Exercises*, §23.

happiness from this perspective derived from the contemplation of God. In contrast, the Ignatian way is to learn to align our choice with God's choice, an approach that emphasises growing obedience. The service of God is best expressed through the identification of a "concrete call" that entails obedience to a specific and unique command.<sup>142</sup> Obedience to the call will be costly, for it will also entail following Jesus in his way of the cross.<sup>143</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar describes Ignatius' approach as "voluntarist" or, more aptly, "personalist."<sup>144</sup> It requires a state of being, modelled on John the Baptist, whereby one allows oneself to decrease in order that God within might increase (Jn 3:30). In the effort to be obedient to God's will, the devout believer thereby seeks to participate in salvation history, identifying not only conceptually but also emotionally and behaviourally with the journey of Christ through life, passion and resurrection. Theological reflection consequently focuses on the demands of the journey to intimacy with God and on the practicalities of life lived in obedience to God's leading.<sup>145</sup>

While perfect love is a commandment for all, Balthasar follows Ignatius in differentiating two ways or states of life in which loving obedience to God can be expressed. One can observe the commandments, or one can pursue "evangelical perfection" which usually entails the adoption of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience.<sup>146</sup> For Ignatius and Balthasar Jesus' life exemplifies both these states. The first thirty years of Jesus' life exemplify the secular state wherein he lived obedient to his parents and the commandments.<sup>147</sup> The last three years exemplify the elected state in which, abandoning all

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<sup>142</sup> Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life*, 391. For a further discussion of states of life, see the posthumously published Hans Urs von Balthasar, Brian McNeil, and D. C. Schindler, *The Laity and the Life of the Counsels: The Church's Mission in the World* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2003).

<sup>143</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Two Modes of Faith," in *Explorations in Theology III: Spiritus Creator* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 89. Balthasar here contrasts Ignatius' approach to faith with that of Luther.

<sup>144</sup> Balthasar, *Two Sisters in the Spirit*, 302-303.

<sup>145</sup> McIntosh, *Mystical Theology*, 107.

<sup>146</sup> Fleming, ed., *Spiritual Exercises*, §135.

<sup>147</sup> For Ignatius' presentation of the two states, see Fleming, ed., *Spiritual Exercises*, §134-135. For Balthasar's presentation of the two states, see Balthasar, *State*, 9, 41, 195. See also "Status Vitae as Paradigm of Dramatic Gestalt," Schindler, *The Dramatic Structure of Truth*, 325-338.

natural human ties, Jesus engaged in the “pure service of His eternal Father.”<sup>148</sup> He left his mother and kin to forge a bond with his disciples and to serve those in need. For the Christian, as for Christ, the secular state comprises a voluntary and obedient surrender to God.<sup>149</sup> Christians enjoy a newfound freedom in the abandonment of pursuits that previously engaged them and the adoption of a life lived in Christ.<sup>150</sup> They discover the peace and joy derived from detachment from the things of the earth and obedience to the gracious leading of God. Most Christians find themselves within the secular state inasmuch as they have not had a call to the elected state. Yet in Balthasar’s view the secular state does not offer the freedom that intimate relationship with Jesus Christ in the elected state offers. The call to the elected state reveals a freedom beyond that of the secular state. It reveals the liberty that derives from being bound only by the law of love.<sup>151</sup> Balthasar comments, “Christian freedom within the ordinances of this world does not represent man’s ultimate freedom.”<sup>152</sup> There is a much greater freedom offered to those who are prepared to accept the painful call to follow God’s leading into a specific, God-ordained task. Such leading entails the breaking of all natural human attachments.

While the loosening of earthly bonds in pursuit of supernatural bonds offers freedom, it also entails pain—both for the one who is called and for those who are left behind. Jesus demonstrated the consequences of obedience to the call when he denied his natural bond with his mother and brethren (Matt 12:47-50). Analogously, to the degree that human beings seek to be obedient to the leading of the Holy Spirit, they too can experience a transition from the secular to the elected state, if the Lord so leads. They too will be led to

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<sup>148</sup> Fleming, ed., *Spiritual Exercises*, §135. It can be argued that these divisions are somewhat simplistic, since Christ was clearly obeying the injunction of his heavenly Father when, for example, he remained in the temple (Lk 2:43-49), even though it caused his family significant distress. Nevertheless, I would contend that Jesus’ leaving his family home was an exterior expression of the interior priority of serving his heavenly Father. Note that Balthasar is at pains to point out that the secular state is not inferior to the elected, a point I develop below.

<sup>149</sup> Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life*, 196.

<sup>150</sup> Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life*, 196-197.

<sup>151</sup> For the observation that “law is the stern countenance which love shows the person who does not yet possess it,” see Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 239.

<sup>152</sup> Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life*, 197.

set aside natural human bonds in favour of supernatural divine bonds. Balthasar points to the “evangelical counsels” of poverty, chastity and obedience as having their typical expression within the Church in the context of priestly and religious life. However, there can occur within the lay state a “differentiated vocation” to greater intimacy with God, thereby constituting the lay person as called to the elected state.<sup>153</sup> Reflection on Thomas Aquinas helps us to understand Balthasar’s position in this respect. Thomas recognises the counsels merely as a “means to an end that is superior to the means and that, under certain circumstances, can be achieved without them.”<sup>154</sup> In other words, the means of the evangelical counsels merely serve the greater end of love. They merely assist in the development of a total surrender of the self to God. It is this latter disposition that Balthasar and von Speyr stress again and again as the necessary condition for receptivity to God’s gracious working in one’s life. Balthasar’s reflections suggest that God can lead a person into total self-surrender without a formal living out of the evangelical counsels.

Whether one is in the secular or elected state, Balthasar insists that the lack of a specific call does not mean that the former state is inferior to the latter. Indeed, the call to an elected state cannot be universal. Since it entails such radical renunciation, it would endanger the continuation of the order of nature ordained by God after the fall.<sup>155</sup> Balthasar emphasises that love does not require the elected state for its full expression. Reflecting on the nature of love, Balthasar highlights a recurring theme in his thought, namely the value of abandonment and attentive receptivity to God’s will for all people regardless of their state:

To love with all our strength does not mean indiscriminately to drag into the house and cast at the feet of the beloved all the outward and inward gifts we possess. To do so might prove embarrassing to the beloved. . . . [T]he gift proper to it is to place itself and all it possesses at the disposal of the beloved, allowing him to decide, to choose, what will be given him. This presumes . . . a disposition of self-giving that is

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<sup>153</sup> Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life*, 366.

<sup>154</sup> Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life*, 59. Balthasar reflects on Thomas’ question “Whether it is right to say that religious perfection consists in these three vows?” for which see St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, ed. Patrick Rogers, trans. Dominican Fathers of the English Province (classictexts.net on CD: The Fien Group, 2002), 2-2, q.186.

<sup>155</sup> Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life*, 167.

no less perfect than that required for a literal and voluntary renunciation of all one's possessions.<sup>156</sup>

If people in the secular state are foundationally available for a radical renunciation not only of their possessions but also of their very selves, they too express a comprehensive and intimate love for Christ.

While those in the secular state must be prepared to abandon all, those in the elected state are required to abandon all. The call to the elected state is costly. The "searing uniqueness" of the call necessarily exposes its recipient to differentiation from those still identified with their family, social or institutional groups.<sup>157</sup> It will lead to life lived "outside" (*ein Ausserhalb*) the standard norms of social expectation.<sup>158</sup> Such being outside involves the privilege of participating in the mission of Christ; it involves also accepting the cross in union with Christ.<sup>159</sup> A more recent commentator has similarly reflected on the cost of the call. James Fowler helps us understand to what Balthasar's "outside" refers. Writing on the six stages of faith through which people pass in their growth towards union with Christ, Fowler describes features of the last of the stages:

Heedless of the threats to self, to primary groups, and to the institutional arrangements of the present order that are involved, Stage 6 becomes a disciplined, activist incarnation – a making real and tangible – of the imperatives of absolute love and justice. . . . The self at Stage 6 engages in spending and being spent for the transformation of present reality in the direction of a transcendent reality.<sup>160</sup>

Here Fowler points to the typical elements that constitute being "outside" one's habitual circle, and to the interior dynamic that leads such people to serve others in love and

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<sup>156</sup> Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life*, 55.

<sup>157</sup> Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life*, 197.

<sup>158</sup> Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life*, 197-199.

<sup>159</sup> Balthasar states that the "inmost form" of the second state is established by Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, for which see Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life*, 199.

<sup>160</sup> James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: the Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (Blackburn, Victoria: Collins Dove, 1981), 200. Italics original.



justice.<sup>161</sup> Such people demonstrate concern neither for themselves, nor for close family ties, nor for the institutions to which they belong.<sup>162</sup> They have a vision of another reality and are prepared to lose all for it. When James and John, for example, left their father to pursue his fishing business with only the hired men for help (Matt 4:21-22; Mk 1:19-20), they demonstrated a disregard for the “primary group” of their immediate family.

Fowler observes that the contribution of people in Stage 6, with their transcendent vision, often appears subversive, generating serious confrontation with the very ones whom they seek to serve.<sup>163</sup> Conyers similarly observes that, while the call is for the sake of community, it actually sets its recipient against the community.<sup>164</sup> Although Jesus was a member of the Jewish race and “came to what was his own . . . his own people did not accept him” (Jn 1:11). Jesus came to serve the community, yet he was rejected by the community. Such people demonstrate the “scandal of the particular” in their concrete, historical expression of a vocation that can surprise and shock, yet nevertheless reveal something of transcendental value.<sup>165</sup> Like Christ, they are subjected to criticism by those around them. The archetypal symbol of the cross becomes embodied in the lives of such people. The pattern is present in all cultures. Balthasar notes that in Greek culture one who had received a personal vocation often encountered opposition through his refusal to be “integrated seamlessly into the social edifice.”<sup>166</sup> This is but an analogy of the suffering of the cross. For Balthasar the cross is the ultimate consequence of Jesus’ surrender of himself to the Father.<sup>167</sup> It is frequently the

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<sup>161</sup> Balthasar refers to this as the “second state.” Worthy of note is that Fowler does not limit this stage to those who have adopted celibate, priestly or religious roles. He includes married people such as Martin Luther King and non-Christians such as Mahatma Gandhi. See Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, 201.

<sup>162</sup> For the similar observation that such persons are “independent of people, things, status, institutions, and free from fear,” see Bernadette Roberts, *The Path to No-Self: Life at the Center* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 122.

<sup>163</sup> Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, 202-203. For a comparable reflection see also Marsha Sinetar, *Ordinary People as Monks and Mystics: Lifestyles for Self-Discovery* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1986), 136.

<sup>164</sup> Conyers, *The Listening Heart*, 17.

<sup>165</sup> Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, 207.

<sup>166</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 1*, 355.

<sup>167</sup> Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life*, 198.

ultimate consequence also for those in Fowler's Stage 6 wherein a physical or social martyrdom may be the reward.<sup>168</sup> Nevertheless, martyrdom is, Balthasar asserts, the paradoxical expression of the total freedom that life in Christ affords. Martyrdom is a patently dramatic consequence of the obedient outworking of one's vocation. Yet Balthasar considers all Christian life to constitute drama, and consequently dramatic categories are a major component of his theological thought.

I now reflect specifically on Balthasar's notion of mission, to which he refers more frequently than to either election or vocation. This is because Balthasar believes that the particular mission entrusted to an individual determines the individual's unique manifestation of his or her essential self—a self which is ultimately grounded in Christ.

### 5. Mission: The Manifestation of the Person

Whether the mission is great or small, in surrendering to the reality of one's mission one is admitted to a sphere that is both personal and transcendent. This is because it is the sphere of the "transcendent Logos" that is both concrete and universal.<sup>169</sup> Hence, by analogy in the human person, uniqueness and universality also coexist. Just as Christ poured himself out, so too the human person is poured out for others as he or she participates in the movement from the perception of the beautiful to the enactment of the good.<sup>170</sup> These dynamics have significant implications for Balthasar's notion of persons as those who, in the discovery of their mission, find not only fulfilment but their very selves. Hence, theology informs Balthasar's anthropology. He considers that a theological anthropology will evolve from dramatic action in engagement between God and humanity on the stage created by heaven and earth.<sup>171</sup> On this stage Jesus Christ is not only the chief actor in the world drama but also

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<sup>168</sup> For references to various historical persons who have suffered in the pursuit of their vision, see Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, 201.

<sup>169</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 2*, 31.

<sup>170</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 2*, 31. See also Balthasar, *Our Task*, 70n79.

<sup>171</sup> For the observation that a "pure" theology and a "pure" anthropology cannot be developed apart from the action in the "Christ-event," see Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 2*, 196.

“the very condition that renders the play possible.”<sup>172</sup> Only God can determine who the individual is:

It is when God addresses a conscious subject, tells him who he is and what he means to the eternal God of truth and shows him the purpose of his existence – that is, imparts a distinctive and divinely authorized mission – that we can say of a conscious subject that he is a “person.”<sup>173</sup>

Here Balthasar distinguishes between an “individual” who is merely a member of the species, and a person who has discovered his or her uniqueness in Christ.<sup>174</sup> This discovery does not occur in an instant. It is a process that occurs through the journey of a lifetime’s exercise of free decisions. Only in this way does an authentic human being develop.<sup>175</sup>

The tradition has variously described the journey. Balthasar identifies a number of contributors. Meister Eckhart speaks of the discovery of a unique “path.” Ignatius describes it as a “form of life.” Scripture refers to it as a “charisma or vocation.” Paul talks of a new creation. Reflecting on Paul, Balthasar stresses that the new creation is not a merely accidental accretion. Rather, it constitutes the very substance of a person’s expression on earth.<sup>176</sup> In other words, the mission constitutes the Christian’s form, exemplified by Jesus giving Simon his new name, Peter.<sup>177</sup> Balthasar argues that the acceptance of a unique mission, as Peter does, causes a socialising of the person, de-privatising him or her, and making the person an integral part of community.<sup>178</sup> Such people no longer have authority to determine their own lives; their lives are surrendered to a divine Other and hence to the society which they serve. In that expropriation, however, they find joy, freedom and fulfilment.

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<sup>172</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 3, 41.

<sup>173</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 3, 207.

<sup>174</sup> See also Hans Urs von Balthasar, “On the Concept of the Person,” *Communio* 13, no. 1 (1986): 18.

<sup>175</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 2, 37.

<sup>176</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 2, 307.

<sup>177</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Prayer*, trans. A. V. Littledale (New York: Paulist Press, 1967), 48-49.

<sup>178</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 3, 271.

Mission can take innumerable forms. It is often too simple and too obvious to be recognised. Life's circumstances and one's abilities may coalesce to identify one's mission, or accidents and chance encounters may point out a new direction. Even one's sins and mistaken choices can, in retrospect, be seen as contributing to the mission implicit in one's life.<sup>179</sup> While the content of the mission, its "what," may well remain hidden, the awareness that one has surrendered in love to God's claim on one's life will suffice to constitute one as sent:

Mission signifies above all a being sent away from the self and in the direction of others. . . . I discover myself outside where the cold winds of life are blowing, exhorting me: go, act, and commit yourself!<sup>180</sup>

Foundationally, the expression of mission requires a readiness to surrender egocentric attachments in abandonment to God. It demands self-transcendence, the dynamics of which we will explore in greater detail in Chapters Five and Six. Such surrender issues in holiness, a form of mission to which Balthasar gives particular attention. Balthasar argues for the evangelical value of sanctity. Sanctity constitutes a mission and belongs to the Church. It must not be seen simply as an "individual ascetical, mystical manifestation."<sup>181</sup> Ultimately, Balthasar insists, the Christian life comprises taking a grace-enabled, faith stance in the "personal divine-human reality that is Christ."<sup>182</sup> The Christian life is, therefore, a condition determined by profound, interior dynamics constituted by immersion in, and relationship with, Jesus Christ.

All of this is the fruit of grace. Just as Israel needed to be cautioned that its election was pure gift, so too the elected one, given a vocation and sent out on mission, needs to be careful that a humble awareness of graced calling does not degenerate into a proud "I am chosen."<sup>183</sup> As Balthasar points out, a salutary reminder still relevant today is the "constant, paradoxical teaching of the Old and New Covenant, that God chooses even 'things that are not to bring to nothing things that are'" (1 Cor 1:28). Balthasar might also have quoted 1 Cor

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<sup>179</sup> Peter Henrici, "The Destiny and Determination of Human Existence," *Communio* 17 (1990): 309.

<sup>180</sup> Henrici, "The Destiny and Determination of Human Existence," 310.

<sup>181</sup> Balthasar, *Two Sisters in the Spirit*, 39.

<sup>182</sup> Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life*, 185.

<sup>183</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 3, 269.

4:7, "What have you that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?" Humility will always accompany the authentic exercise of mission.

Balthasar discusses two Carmelites, Thérèse of Lisieux and Elizabeth of Dijon, who eminently demonstrate such humility, and further develops his theology of mission. Balthasar explains that God has an idea for each individual which is expressed in the outworking of mission, an outworking that has social implications given that it expresses itself in service within the context of the Church. Moreover, implicit in the mission is the particular way in which each individual expresses his or her unique form of sanctity, a sanctity derived from a life lived in alignment with the will of God.<sup>184</sup> Balthasar cites Thérèse of Lisieux's desire to fulfil God's will. He explains that such fulfilment does not entail the pursuit of an "anonymous universal law that is the same for all," but rather the pursuit of an "individual law."<sup>185</sup> Such a law is not binding; it is totally freeing, for it is the realisation of God's unique and loving design for an individual's life. Surrender to this law entails one's whole being and yields the unique expression of sanctity appropriate to that individual. For Thérèse of Lisieux, as for all people, there was a correlation between her grasp of her mission and her growth in sanctity. Balthasar refers to John the Baptist's observation of the same dynamic: "He must increase, I must decrease."<sup>186</sup> Thérèse expressed the unique idea God had for her particular mission when she articulated her vision of the "little way." In so doing, she demonstrates the outcome of engagement with mystery and its incarnation in her life in both mission and holiness. It takes a concrete form in its service to others.

The example of Elizabeth of Dijon, whose religious name was Elizabeth of the Trinity, also assists Balthasar in his endeavour to articulate the elements of mission. Although expressing different dynamics in their unique calls, Balthasar sees Thérèse and Elizabeth as complementary. Together they reveal the unity of mission and holiness as they pursue God's idea for them and the prayerful contemplative foundation so necessary for that pursuit.

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<sup>184</sup> Balthasar, *Two Sisters in the Spirit*, 20. For a study of Balthasar's notion of holiness, see Victoria S. Harrison, "Personal Identity and Integration: von Balthasar's Phenomenology of Human Holiness," *The Heythrop Journal* 40, no. 4 (1999): 424-437.

<sup>185</sup> Balthasar, *Two Sisters in the Spirit*, 21.

<sup>186</sup> Balthasar, *Two Sisters in the Spirit*, 110, 302.

Elizabeth, like Thérèse, belonged to the Carmelite order, which Balthasar considered to have been granted great missionary graces.<sup>187</sup> Balthasar notes that, as members of an enclosed order wherein contemplative presence to God was the “one thing necessary,” they model an alternative to the activism so typical of many Church endeavours.<sup>188</sup> Elizabeth realised her mission in contemplative silence and in the suffering that coexists with such a call.<sup>189</sup> Her growth into that mission was not merely the unfolding of natural abilities. On the contrary, Elizabeth experienced suffering (as did Thérèse) because it entailed her compliance with a transcendent ideal accessible only through intimacy with God.<sup>190</sup> Foundational to this adjustment were the gifts of faith, hope and love that allow one to abide in the “orbit” of God’s eternal plan.<sup>191</sup>

For Elizabeth such abiding yielded a limitless freedom.<sup>192</sup> However, her fearless abandonment to God was not for herself alone. It had, and continues to have, ecclesial and social ramifications, since those who respond obediently to God’s calling will always be a testimony for others of God’s gracious love.<sup>193</sup> Balthasar recognises that their certainty of faith is intended as encouragement for those whose faith lacks such experiential assurance:

They are supposed to let the light they receive on the heights reach others. They are supposed to permit others to experience as social and ecclesial assurances those certainties of faith that they have been given, for these things were not intended for them personally but for them as one member among many, standing in indissoluble solidarity. They are supposed to show what complete love, complete trust, complete confidence look like and to offer not only an example but an outstretched hand that pulls the others up higher.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Balthasar, *Two Sisters in the Spirit*, 373.

<sup>188</sup> Balthasar, *Two Sisters in the Spirit*, 373.

<sup>189</sup> Balthasar, *Two Sisters in the Spirit*, 376.

<sup>190</sup> Balthasar, *Two Sisters in the Spirit*, 382, 393.

<sup>191</sup> Balthasar, *Two Sisters in the Spirit*, 393 -399.

<sup>192</sup> For Balthasar’s reflections on the extent of such freedom derived from total surrender, see Balthasar, *Two Sisters in the Spirit*, 420-437.

<sup>193</sup> Balthasar, *Two Sisters in the Spirit*, 419.

<sup>194</sup> Balthasar, *Two Sisters in the Spirit*, 417.

As Adrienne von Speyr observed, those who respond to God's call are meant to be a bridge between God and humanity.<sup>195</sup> Being that bridge will, however, expose them to testing. The fact that such testing occurs derives from the particular elements that comprise a mission.

Balthasar identifies two elements in the concept of a mission, the first being a relationship with the one who sends, the second being ownership of being sent.<sup>196</sup> While the one who sends will be present in the consciousness of the one sent, there is a distinction between the two parties. The sent one is free, a fact that will necessitate the exercise of human considerations. Hence, the second element in the concept of mission comprises planning and testing the call.<sup>197</sup> Jesus incarnates these two principles. While Jesus knew himself sent by the Father, he remained free. Citing the gospel of John, Balthasar points out that Jesus did what he saw the Father doing and spoke what he heard the Father speaking. Yet Balthasar observes that, while the Father sent Jesus, it was not the Father but the mission that compelled Jesus, a mission that coincided with his "filial freedom."<sup>198</sup>

Authentic identification with the mission develops through the challenge and suffering undergone in obedience to the mission.<sup>199</sup> Jesus' identification with his God-given mission was total in a way that it never becomes for the human person. Nevertheless, even human bearers of a missionary call can experience the mission as having prominence in their consciousness. A new perspective develops: all that has gone before is seen as leading to that which is currently expressed through the mission. Balthasar points to the biblical instances of name changes to exemplify his point. Abram became Abraham, Jacob became Israel, Simon became Peter. For some, mission is given at birth even though they only

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<sup>195</sup> Balthasar, *Our Task*, 189.

<sup>196</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 3*, 168.

<sup>197</sup> For a discussion of this point see also Harrison, "Personal Identity and Integration: von Balthasar's Phenomenology of Human Holiness," 428.

<sup>198</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 3*, 168. For a study of the dialectical tension inherent in the relationship between the Son sent in mission and the Son's freedom to act, see Michael Waldstein, "The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples in John," *Communio* 17 (1990): 311-333.

<sup>199</sup> Cf. Heb 5:8

become aware of this at the time of the call: Jeremiah, John the Baptist, Paul. For these their identity derives from their mission.<sup>200</sup>

Balthasar reflects upon the way a vocation is experienced as an “‘ought’ that burns in the hero’s heart.”<sup>201</sup> Men and women called in this way experience the call not as a “categorical imperative” but as something dwelling intimately and freely as their personal task. By the gift of the Holy Spirit, God’s will is infused into the believer’s heart.<sup>202</sup> This gift will engender “theological hope,” the expectation of something occurring soon, the expectation that an ontological change is imminent. While chronology is important, it is not the focus of such an attitude but merely the means for effecting the transition from the believer’s present state to the anticipated state. The attitude comprises an “attentive, watchful waiting.”<sup>203</sup> An individual alert to God’s will and call can exercise such attentiveness.

Balthasar’s notion of Christian experience is especially pertinent to these considerations, given his belief that Christian experience is a “progressive entrance of the believing person into the total reality of faith, and the progressive ‘realisation’ of this reality.”<sup>204</sup> Ultimately, Christian experience is one of being expropriated for the other. It is one of being expropriated by and for Christ and of learning to function as a member of His body, responsive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Philosophy and theology help to account for this journey of engagement with mystery, an engagement that sustains a capacity to attend to that which dwells so intimately and mysteriously within. Hence, the following chapter explores the philosophical underpinnings for Balthasar’s notion of the person and in so doing offers the objective grounds for the possibility of hearing God’s call.

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<sup>200</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 3, 155.

<sup>201</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 1, 359.

<sup>202</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 1, 359. While not cited, this is a variation upon Rom 5:5 which refers to God’s *love* being poured into our hearts, rather than God’s will. The capacity to pursue this interior dynamic freely is limited by sin, to put it in Christian terms, or fate, if put in pagan terms, for which see Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 1, 360.

<sup>203</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, “Improvisation on Spirit and Future,” in *Explorations in Theology III: Spiritus Creator* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 163.

<sup>204</sup> Balthasar, *Glory* 1, 239.



## 6. Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented the subjective, experiential ground for Balthasar's theological reflection on vocation and mission. While others recognise that Balthasar's work cannot be separated from his experience, Balthasar himself insists that his work cannot be separated from his relationship with Adrienne von Speyr. Hence I have referred both to Balthasar's own history and to that of his colleague in the Spirit, and have described the primary attitudinal requirements they consider necessary for receptive availability to mission: a confessional attitude of transparency towards God and a readiness for total surrender of self for the radical Christian life of attentiveness to God's calling.

Balthasar's dramatic experience of vocation clearly informs his theological reflection. However, while dramatic theory is at the centre of his theological thinking, not only in terms of its medial position in his primary opus but also in terms of his theoretical considerations, Balthasar's "first word" for philosophical, and in particular theological, reflection is that of beauty.<sup>205</sup> Consequently, I considered the aesthetic preconditions that enable perception of, and subsequent responsiveness to, Jesus Christ in vocation and mission.

The response to the attractiveness of Christ's call, outworked in vocation and mission, resolves an existential self-question for the human being. In living out one's mission in Christ, one discovers through the action of that mission the full manifestation of who one is. Consonant with Balthasar's dramatic theory wherein the play's character is revealed through the action, human persons discover who they are through the action of the unique task assigned to them. Such tasks or missions take countless forms. While each form is unique to the person, it nevertheless has transcendent significance and hence a universal reach in its service to the Church. Balthasar draws on the examples of Thérèse of Lisieux and Elizabeth of Dijon to exemplify his theology of mission.

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<sup>205</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 18. This is in contradistinction to Kant for whom beauty is the last word, for which see Davies, "Theological Aesthetics," 133.

In keeping with a phenomenological approach, this chapter has presented the experiential effects of engagement with God's calling to a particular vocational expression. The task now is to explore more fully how and why the discovery of mission satisfies the existential question which initiated this study. We will find that identifying the foundational philosophical and theological preconditions for receptivity to mission serves our inquiry.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE HUMAN PERSON ORIENTED TO MYSTERY

Both Hans Urs von Balthasar's experience of calling and the development of his theology demonstrate the importance of attentiveness to experience. Essential to both is a capacity to recognise beauty as well as an openness to its transformative impact. Through prayerful contemplative presence to God's gracious presence, one can become aware of a calling to a vocation and its specific expression in mission. Balthasar's experience of being "branded" by the event of beauty is not, however, the lot of everybody.<sup>1</sup> There are many who are unable to reflect on a dramatic moment of grace that shaped their future life, yet who desire to follow God's will for them as best they can. Such following requires that people learn to discern God's ways. While ultimately the receipt of a vocation occurs at the mysterious interface of human engagement with God, there are some measures that devout believers can take to cooperate with God's desire for their lives. This chapter explores the foundations within the human person that make receptivity to mystery possible.

The exploration is presented under the following headings:

1. Our Ontological Orientation to the Mystery of God
2. The Christological Character of Receptivity
3. The Gift of Relationship: A Foundation for Prayer and Mission
4. The Holy Spirit and Mystery
5. Human Consciousness and Some Epistemological Considerations
6. Summary and Conclusion

#### 1. Our Ontological Orientation to the Mystery of God

In this section, I first point to Balthasar's considerations of the mysterious reality of glory present in creation, a presence that prepares the way for human engagement with that glory. I then present Balthasar's identification of different facets that contribute to our

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<sup>1</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 2*, 30-31.

foundational receptivity. While we do not have to learn the skill of receptivity to God on the basis of barren ground as it were, nevertheless receptivity must have priority in our philosophical attitude to God and to the world.

Hans Urs von Balthasar engages both philosophy and theology in his approach to the issue of our orientation to mystery. Indeed, he considers that theology is diminished by a lack of philosophical reflection.<sup>2</sup> Thomas Aquinas particularly informed Balthasar's thinking.<sup>3</sup>

Thomas' metaphysics, Balthasar says, reflects the mystery of God's glory:

It is a celebration of the reality of the real, of that all-embracing mystery of being which surpasses the powers of human thought, a mystery pregnant with the very mystery of God, a mystery in which creatures have access to participation in the reality of God, a mystery which in its nothingness and non-subsistence is shot through with the light of the freedom of the creative principle of unfathomable love.<sup>4</sup>

Balthasar appreciates the way in which Thomas values mystery. Mystery is real, present in God and in creatures who participate in that mystery. For Balthasar, influenced by Erich Przywara (1889-1972), all living entities are dynamically oriented towards this mystery because they are dynamically oriented towards God. Ultimately, reality is for Balthasar a mystery through which God expresses creative love. Hence, there is an analogy between created being and God.<sup>5</sup> This analogy enables conversation about God and our engagement with God. Given that the experience of vocation and its expression in mission are a participation in the mystery of God, it is important to understand as much as possible how it is that we take part in that mystery. Only then can we better appreciate how to cooperate

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Balthasar, *Theo-Logic 1*, 7-8, 14, 32.

<sup>3</sup> For the observation that Aquinas is "omnipresent" in Balthasar's corpus, see Peter Henrici, "The Philosophy of Hans Urs von Balthasar," in *Hans Urs von Balthasar: His Life and Work*, ed. D.L. Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 162. Balthasar omitted Thomas Aquinas from the sequence of those who exemplify clerical theological styles, for which see Balthasar, *Glory 2*, 21. Nevertheless, Henrici notes that Balthasar cites Aquinas repeatedly in *Theo-Logic 1*, an attention that is given to no other thinker. For the observation that while both Martin Heidegger and Thomas Aquinas inform Balthasar's theology of Being, the latter carries far more significance for Balthasar, see Oliver Davies, "Von Balthasar and the Problem of Being," *New Blackfriars* 79, no. 923 (1998): 11.

<sup>4</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 4*, 407.

<sup>5</sup> For an extended discussion of the analogy of being, see Bernard Montagnes and Andrew Tallon, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being According to Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Edward M. Macierowski and Pol Vandeveld (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2004).

with the grace of the Holy Spirit in being attentively receptive to God and in discerning our vocation and mission. Mystery invites surrender for Hans Urs von Balthasar. In his understanding surrender, and in particular receptivity to the mystery of divine being to which one surrenders, is the primary instinct of the human being.

God's mysterious being is manifest in each instance of all things that exist.<sup>6</sup> Since that being is beautiful, being is like God.<sup>7</sup> The radiant glory of God appears in the being of ordinary things, ensuring that matter does not conceal the spiritual world.<sup>8</sup> Concerned with both the experience of glory and the articulation of that experience, Balthasar nevertheless acknowledges that there is no clear definition of glory.<sup>9</sup> Instead, he attempts to demonstrate it through twelve theologies that, metaphorically speaking, are "rays" of glory.<sup>10</sup> He observes that the notion of God's glory permeates the bible. From a biblical point of view, God's glory is universal:

God himself is glorious: in his appearing, in his Word and law, in his message of grace and in his act of redemption; therefore he is glorious also in what he has established, in man whom he has favoured, for man is, in his being, ordered "to the praise of glory". . . God is glorious in his Church and in the whole cosmos irradiated by his glory.<sup>11</sup>

The bible opens vast vistas for reflection on God's glory. The vista pertinent to this study is our being ordered to the praise of God's glory (Eph 1:6). That praise most fully occurs when human beings are fulfilling the unique task to which God calls them.

There is, however, not only the biblical universality of God's glory. There is another universality. It is the "universality of the human spirit," which has an intrinsic orientation to

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<sup>6</sup> See an illustrative reference by Levinas to the "neutral murmur of Being beneath beings," in Hart, Introduction to Hart, ed., *Counter-Experiences*, 27.

<sup>7</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 4*, 400.

<sup>8</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 430, 437.

<sup>9</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 4*, 11.

<sup>10</sup> See Balthasar, *Glory 2*; Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics: Studies in Theological Style: Lay Styles*, vol. 3 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986).

<sup>11</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 4*, 11.

inquiry and to understanding “the being of all that is.”<sup>12</sup> Such openness necessitates metaphysical reflection. Hence, Balthasar considers that comprehensive reflection must consider both the glory of God as well as the nature of being, namely that which God has created. Balthasar’s idea of being is somewhat difficult to grasp conceptually, for there is in “being” an unfathomable concurrence of both “fullness and emptiness.”<sup>13</sup> Being is full because it is a “noble” effect of God; it is empty because it has no existence in itself.<sup>14</sup> While being is never an object and therefore cannot be seen, we nevertheless do see being in all that exists.<sup>15</sup> An understanding of Balthasar’s concept is helped by Anthony Kelly’s notion of being. Kelly notes that being is not some kind of general idea. Rather, it is the “more attractive goal pulling intelligence beyond sense impressions, beyond imaginative figurations, even beyond thinking itself, to a reverent objectivity before what is given in its uniqueness.”<sup>16</sup> Such a view privileges the giftedness of that which exists, a position to which Balthasar subscribes, and also identifies the different facets of intentionality operative within the human person oriented towards the gift of God’s gracious love.

Balthasar gives various descriptions of “Being,” the term given to that which transcends all particular beings.<sup>17</sup> He refers to it as overarching everything and as being “sublime and serene.”<sup>18</sup> Then he adds wonderingly, “nothing of all this had to be as it is.”<sup>19</sup> For Balthasar

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<sup>12</sup> Balthasar, *Glory* 4, 11. Balthasar does not here define what he means by “human spirit.” I suggest that Bernard Lonergan’s notion of “self-transcending intentionality,” treated in the next chapter, is a good explanatory account of the same dynamic.

<sup>13</sup> Balthasar, *Glory* 4, 404.

<sup>14</sup> Balthasar, *Glory* 4, 404. Balthasar would concur with the postmodern qualification that being is “empty” not because of an absence of meaning, but because of a surplus which the human mind cannot grasp. For a similar observation concerning the deficiency of concepts, preventing a grasp of the significance of Christ’s resurrection, see Jean-Luc Marion, “They Recognized Him; and He Became Invisible to Them,” *Modern Theology* 18 (2002): 151.

<sup>15</sup> Balthasar, *Glory* 1, 164.

<sup>16</sup> Kelly, *The Resurrection Effect*, 18.

<sup>17</sup> Note that this is consonant with Schindler’s usage, for which see Schindler, *The Dramatic Structure of Truth*, 32n13.

<sup>18</sup> Balthasar, *Glory* 5, 635.

<sup>19</sup> Balthasar, *Glory* 5, 635.

the term “Being” refers to an abstract concept that articulates the experience of wonder. It is the wonder that there is something, rather than nothing.<sup>20</sup> There are implications here for our human response. As Balthasar explains, “The mystery of Being, which is manifest, invites the creaturely spirit to move away from and beyond itself and entrust and surrender itself to that mystery.”<sup>21</sup> Being, Balthasar says, entails a “categorical imperative,” for it demands that we act as if we owed our very existence to a “boundless grace.”<sup>22</sup> This is a principle of immediate relevance for discerning and responding to a vocation, since it entails a conscious decision to surrender to mystery. There is a foundational structure of surrender and receptivity that is integral to human beings. It enables us to come to understand that there is a mysterious ground integral to a perceived form and it serves our capacity to perceive the mystery to which we must surrender. Nevertheless, we must also be willing to suffer the intellectual and existential formation that enables the perception of interiority and depth within the beautiful form.<sup>23</sup> Contemplative, prayer-filled faith in loving engagement with God is an essential prerequisite for such recognition.<sup>24</sup> The Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* are specifically designed to help achieve this formation.

David Schindler reflects on an ontology that respects the event of a loving relationship and the receptivity implicit in that relationship.<sup>25</sup> Receptivity to the other is an essential feature of love. He insists that the being of the creature is essentially and simultaneously being in, from, with and towards another.<sup>26</sup> Schindler acknowledges the value of personal autonomy

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<sup>20</sup> Balthasar, *Glory* 5, 614.

<sup>21</sup> Balthasar, *Glory* 1, 450.

<sup>22</sup> Balthasar, *Glory* 5, 633.

<sup>23</sup> Balthasar, *Glory* 1, 26, 464, 481.

<sup>24</sup> For Balthasar’s discussion of prayer, see Balthasar, *Prayer*. For a reflection on the prayerfully contemplative relationship between Jesus and the Father, see Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 3, 170-172.

<sup>25</sup> David Schindler, “Which Ontology is Necessary for an Adequate Anthropology?,” *Anthropotes* 15, no. 2 (1999): 423-426.

<sup>26</sup> Schindler, “Which Ontology?,” 424. For an extended treatment of Schindler’s notion of the structure of existence, see Ch 10, “‘Thomism’ and the Human Person: The Question of Receptivity and the Philosophy-Theology Distinction” in David L. Schindler, *Heart of the World, Center of the Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 275-312.

and the dignity derived from acting on our own initiative with its accompanying emphasis on what we do.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, there is a dimension that is more important for an “adequate conception of the human person.”<sup>28</sup> It is the emphasis of Pope John Paul II on the prior occurrence of existence and participation in community. On this understanding the primary exigence of the human person is to receive.<sup>29</sup> We are already in relation to God in Jesus Christ and this is a relation that operates also in our relationships with others. Consequently, “receptivity . . . must be recapitulated in every human action.”<sup>30</sup> This would mean, then, that the “most basic exigence of the human person is not to initiate.”<sup>31</sup> Hence, human persons do not first image God by acting authoritatively and by choosing the direction their lives will take. Rather, the position of autonomy and self-possession through action must be sustained within a context which gives primacy to relationship and receptivity.<sup>32</sup>

This carries implications for the mode in which we engage with all aspects of creation. Because creation is gift, we are first obliged to receive in love. Our action must follow this initial receptivity to the “given.”<sup>33</sup> Schindler thus stresses the importance of the right emphasis between being (*esse*) and doing (*agere*) within the Catholic community. He is adamant:

[U]nless Catholics ensure that receptivity, with its implication of interiority and contemplativeness, be given its anterior place in the constitution of being and acting, their own responses to the culture . . . will themselves embody . . . the very activism, extroversion, and disposition toward ‘having’ and ‘possessing’ that are the source of the problem.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Schindler, *Heart of the World*, 275-277. Schindler here endorses the work of John Courtney Murray.

<sup>28</sup> Schindler, *Heart of the World*, 277.

<sup>29</sup> Schindler, *Heart of the World*, 277.

<sup>30</sup> Schindler, *Heart of the World*, 277.

<sup>31</sup> Schindler, *Heart of the World*, 277. Emphasis original.

<sup>32</sup> Schindler, *Heart of the World*, 277.

<sup>33</sup> Schindler, *Heart of the World*, 278.

<sup>34</sup> Schindler, *Heart of the World*, 278.



Schindler here warns against the same egocentrically oriented activity which Conyers identified as operative within current society.<sup>35</sup> Only valuing a contemplatively receptive attitude will prevent an activism that denies access to interiority and attentiveness to the leading of the Holy Spirit in one's life.

Schindler suggests that we need to revise our notions of personal autonomy and action in order to give priority to receptivity. Keeping within the Thomist tradition, he draws on the work of Norris Clarke to support his argument for a more comprehensive metaphysics of the human person.<sup>36</sup> Norris Clarke argues that receptivity is a "positive perfection of being" and not merely a deficiency or lack, as is the case when, for example, the focus is on the lack of development in children whose need to receive is so essential for their wellbeing.<sup>37</sup> Following the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas, Clarke points out that, while the self-expression that occurs through action is the "natural perfection or flowering of being itself," it is nevertheless also the case that "relationality is a primordial dimension of every real being."<sup>38</sup> Schindler applauds Clarke for highlighting the importance of relation and receptivity for the full development of the human person. He criticizes him, however, for grounding that relationality in action (*agere*) rather than being (*esse*).<sup>39</sup> The technical development of this critique need not concern us here. Suffice it to say that for Schindler receptivity "must be begun already in *esse* . . . and is thus prior (ontologically) to communicativity."<sup>40</sup> Receptivity is inscribed in the very being of things and hence it determines our capacity for communication.

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<sup>35</sup> See Conyers, *The Listening Heart*.

<sup>36</sup> Schindler, *Heart of the World*, 278-279. Schindler cites W. Norris Clarke, "Person, Being, and St Thomas," *Communio* 19, no. Winter (1992): 601-618; W. Norris Clarke, *Person and Being* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1993).

<sup>37</sup> Clarke, *Person and Being*, 83; Schindler, *Heart of the World*, 282-284.

<sup>38</sup> Clarke, quoted in Schindler, *Heart of the World*, 279. Schindler here draws from Clarke, "Person, Being, and St Thomas," 607.

<sup>39</sup> Schindler, *Heart of the World*, 281.

<sup>40</sup> Schindler, *Heart of the World*, 287.

There is, then, an ontological basis for the receptivity which enables engagement with mystery. Even more important to Balthasar, however, is the Christological basis for it. Ultimately, Balthasar defines the truth of being in biblically revealed, Christocentric and trinitarian terms, to a consideration of which we now turn.

## 2. The Christological Character of Receptivity

The obedience of the Son of God in pursuing the mission to which he was sent holds more significance for Balthasar than ontological categories.<sup>41</sup> In Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man, the analogy of being that exists between the being of the Creator and the being of the created occurs concretely.<sup>42</sup> It thereby establishes Christ as the model for all creaturely analogies, making Christ a “concrete universal,” through whom, by the Holy Spirit, Christ’s historical reality has a universal reach.<sup>43</sup> Hence, Christ’s receptivity to the Father is the receptivity to which we analogously are called. As we grow in our identification with Christ, so our capacity to be receptive commensurately increases.

Balthasar’s Christocentric approach demonstrates how we as created beings can participate in the dynamics of trinitarian life. Given that all created entities derive their existence from Jesus Christ who is the Word of God, to some extent Christ provides a template for human existence. He establishes parallel structures within the human being and thereby creates conditions for human functioning that are analogous to those of the Word who became flesh.<sup>44</sup> Pertinent to these structures is the fact that, while being God, Christ is nevertheless also the “Other” within God. As such, he receives all that he is from God. Hence, creation,

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<sup>41</sup> For the distinction between ontological and “obediential” categories, see McIntosh, *Christology from Within*, 5.

<sup>42</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life*, trans. Sr. Mary Frances McCarthy (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983), 192.

<sup>43</sup> See, for example, Balthasar, *Theo-Logic 1*, 13. For the reference to Christ’s life providing a “concrete universal point of unity” for all Christian destinies, see Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 2*, 50. For a discussion of Christ as the “concrete form within which the *universal* fullness of the love of God is...bound up” see Medard Kehl, “Hans Urs von Balthasar: A Portrait ” in *The Von Balthasar Reader*, ed. Medard Kehl and Werner Löser (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1982), 9.

<sup>44</sup> McIntosh, *Mystical Theology*, 102.

which is indeed other than God, for God created it *ex nihilo*, can image and enter into God through Jesus Christ, providing thereby a Christocentric basis for human receptivity to grace.<sup>45</sup> As McIntosh writes succinctly, human beings are predisposed to share in the life-pattern of Jesus and Jesus is predisposed to openness to human beings.<sup>46</sup> Hence, just as there is an ontological foundation for developing contemplative receptivity, even more pertinently there is a Christological foundation for the possibility of such receptivity. Balthasar's Christological reflections, so central to his overall perspective, have immediate implications for human living.<sup>47</sup>

In contrast to human-initiated, neo-Platonic striving to overcome our creaturely limitations, God approaches us in Jesus Christ. In the transforming intimacy of this approach God establishes new modes of divine-human engagement through participation, enabled by the Holy Spirit, in the person of Jesus Christ. For Balthasar ontological transformation achieved through participation in Christ means something beyond that which can be accessed through psychological strategies. It is more than a matter of the transformation of habits of heart and mind. The very person is "fashioned after Christ" and "receives a mission that is 'cut from' Christ's and represents a portion of the Church's mission."<sup>48</sup> Such persons become Christ-like in significant ways as they pursue the unique mission to which Christ calls them. One particularly significant manifestation of Christ-likeness is the increasing capacity for receptivity. It is a capacity that permeates every facet of the human person, including the sensory domain. Through Christ God makes a "sensory approach to the heart," a thought inconceivable apart from Christian revelation.<sup>49</sup> Just as Christ learnt to "sense" how to respond to the Father's leading in every encounter in his life through the Holy Spirit's guiding pressure of love, so human beings can analogously learn the receptive capacity that enables

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<sup>45</sup> Balthasar, "A Résumé of My Thought," 4-5.

<sup>46</sup> McIntosh, *Mystical Theology*, 102.

<sup>47</sup> For the observation that Balthasar transforms Christology into a "beckoning to the human soul," see McIntosh, "Christology," 24.

<sup>48</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 3*, 527.

<sup>49</sup> Balthasar, *Presence and Thought*, 133.

moment by moment awareness of Christ's will for their lives.<sup>50</sup> Foundational to the possibility for such awareness of Christ's will, however, is identification with Christ's paschal mystery, which I will next consider.

Christ's contemplative receptivity and obedience to the Father led him in every moment of his life to a total self-giving, out of love for others. Ultimately, it led him to his death. Just as the paschal mystery is central to Christ's life pattern, so too it must be central to the Christian's life pattern.<sup>51</sup> It is important therefore to appreciate the implications of Christ's passion for ordinary living. For Balthasar, following Ignatius, the paschal mystery has its egological expression in indifference.

Ignatius articulates the necessity for indifference in his presentation of the "Principle and Foundation" of the *Exercises*. He instructs that we must "make ourselves indifferent to all created things." We are to "want not health rather than sickness, riches rather than poverty, honour rather than dishonour, long rather than short life . . . desiring and choosing only what is most conducive" to the service of God.<sup>52</sup> Balthasar expresses the same principle:

Finite freedom must become unmade, must come to have no path of its own, must attain calm composure or indifference: this is the categorical precondition if it is to receive a vocation and destiny (going beyond the philosophical relation to the Absolute) from the hands of infinite Will.<sup>53</sup>

Balthasar here points to the peaceful ground of detached equanimity that must undergird the discernment of a vocation. The development of such composure requires training, and the Ignatian *Exercises* and other forms of spirituality provide such training.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> McIntosh, "Christology," 28, 33. McIntosh here refers to a pertinent study reflecting on this approach, for which see Raymund Schwager SJ, *Jesus of Nazareth: How He Understood His Life*, trans. James G. Williams (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998).

<sup>51</sup> For Balthasar's extended treatment of the paschal mystery, see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990).

<sup>52</sup> Fleming, ed., *Spiritual Exercises*, §23. See also Balthasar, *Two Sisters in the Spirit*, 302ff.

<sup>53</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 2*, 304ff. For an extended discussion of indifference in the context of Balthasar's consideration of the mission of Thérèse of Lisieux, see Balthasar, *Two Sisters in the Spirit*, 302-321.

<sup>54</sup> Quash, "Christology," 149.

The capacity for indifference lies at the core of our very being. Indeed, for Balthasar, “where freedom lays hold of itself, it lays hold of being at its deepest and broadest.”<sup>55</sup> This is because infinite freedom is a constitutive dimension of finite freedom. It expresses itself as indifference and detachment within the human being.<sup>56</sup> The failure to find human satisfaction through the ensuing absence of attachments could become a source of torment, were it not for the empowerment by infinite freedom for finite freedom to realise itself.<sup>57</sup> Such empowerment occurs through Christ in whom finite freedom indwells infinite freedom.

Balthasar elaborates upon the dynamic of indifference in his discussion of the “metaphysics of the saints,” a “metaphysics” characterised by abandonment, self-surrender, and transparency towards God.<sup>58</sup> While Balthasar’s immediate impetus for the term derives from the Ignatian spiritual tradition, the principle is present in much earlier spiritualities. The Fathers spoke of *apatheia* and the Rhineland mystics of *Gelassenheit*.<sup>59</sup> Balthasar demonstrates the outworking of indifference in his discussion of Thérèse of Lisieux.<sup>60</sup>

Thérèse shows us that implicit in indifference is the paradox of action and “intensely active” receptivity, the latter being not a quietist drowning of works in a “flood of faith,” but rather an active abandonment to and trust in God.<sup>61</sup> Thérèse exemplifies the principle of indifference to a heightened extent in her readiness to surrender even her ardent desire to identify with Christ’s passion through suffering, a desire seemingly so fundamental to her calling.<sup>62</sup> Balthasar nicely expresses Thérèse’s experience when he observes that in Thérèse’s

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<sup>55</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 3, 458.

<sup>56</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 2, 200.

<sup>57</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 2, 200.

<sup>58</sup> Balthasar, *Glory* 5, 102. Balthasar frequently draws on the saints to demonstrate a point. For example, he argues that only the saints are authentic interpreters of theodramatic action and only the saints respond adequately to Jesus Christ, for which see Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 2, 14; Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 3, 28-29.

<sup>59</sup> Balthasar, *Glory* 5, 102. See also, Aidan Nichols, *The Word has been Abroad: A Guide through Balthasar's Aesthetics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 184.

<sup>60</sup> Balthasar, *Two Sisters in the Spirit*, 302-321.

<sup>61</sup> Balthasar, *Two Sisters in the Spirit*, 302.

<sup>62</sup> Balthasar, *Two Sisters in the Spirit*, 302, 312-314. See also McIntosh, *Christology from Within*, 62.

understanding absolute renunciation required the renunciation even of renunciation.<sup>63</sup>

Thérèse's desire to enter Carmel was according to the will of God. Yet the suffering which she experienced before she could enter purified her longing. This process of purification repeatedly occurred in her Carmelite journey. It purified even her human attachment to God's will, such that she learnt to surrender all her desire and intentions, discovering thereby that they emerged "afresh as a clean-cut act of God's will."<sup>64</sup> While Thérèse desired to pursue God's will, to the extent that it was *her* desire rather than *God's* desire within her, that desire required purification. Ultimately, Thérèse learnt to seek only abandonment (*Gelassenheit*) to whatever the Lord ordained for her.<sup>65</sup> Eventually, only God within her desired God's will.

The process through which God takes God's close companions in forging the attitude of indifference disconcerts, as Christ disconcerted his mother at Cana (Jn 2:4). It exposes them to confusion and suffering, like that experienced by Martha and Mary at Christ's seemingly inexplicable failure to prevent the death of their brother, Lazarus (Jn 11:6). Yet the indifference that God's inscrutable work establishes within believers ensures that the subsequent outworking of God's will in their lives emerges totally purified. In the process of this fiery transformation believers participate in Christ's mystery of death and resurrection.<sup>66</sup> They frequently experience bewilderment until ultimately they learn to surrender to the mystery of unknowing on their spiritual journey.

Such surrender occurs through the alternating experiences of consolation and desolation, which train the human faculties not to attribute to the self that which belongs to the spirit.<sup>67</sup> Diadochus of Photice traces a threefold development which moves from the stage of beginner, characterised by consolation, through an intermediary stage of desolation that

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<sup>63</sup> Balthasar, *Two Sisters in the Spirit*, 314.

<sup>64</sup> Balthasar, *Two Sisters in the Spirit*, 307.

<sup>65</sup> Balthasar, *Glory* 5, 52; Balthasar, *Two Sisters in the Spirit*, 315.

<sup>66</sup> Balthasar, *Two Sisters in the Spirit*, 306.

<sup>67</sup> Balthasar, *Glory* 1, 249.

elicits “a sadness dear to God,” and finally to the consolation of those perfected through suffering and identification with the cross of Jesus Christ.<sup>68</sup> The point of this process is to teach the soul to locate its deepest source of satisfaction more and more in the very depths of its being and to be increasingly attentive to the movements of *sapientia*, described by Bernard of Clairvaux as the “truth savoured through experience.”<sup>69</sup>

The outcome is interior transformation. Balthasar quotes the poet, Claudel, who vividly describes the suffering believers experience: it is as though a “lodger has moved in, one who does not hesitate to rearrange the chairs according to his taste, to drive nails into the walls and, if necessary, even to saw up the furniture when he is cold and needs a fire.”<sup>70</sup> Yet such graces are released through this process. Ignatius of Loyola was amazed by, and Balthasar similarly marvels at, the experience which, consequent on their following of the Lord, resulted in their deepest interiority being transposed to what Balthasar refers to as a “sphere . . . unknown and unaccustomed.”<sup>71</sup> Indeed, Paul’s awareness that he no longer lives, but rather Christ now lives in him (Gal. 2:20), becomes a statement that the expropriated Christian can now make his or her own. In this state there is no autonomous ego functioning independently of the will of God. There is no longer a finite centre that can be pointed to as the “self.” As Christ allowed himself to be “plundered and shared out in Passion and Eucharist,” so the expropriated Christian also participates (to his or her capacity) in this being poured out for others.<sup>72</sup>

Balthasar uses the term “expropriation” (*Enteignung*) to refer to this fruit of a total identification with Christ’s passion. The transparency and purity of the saints’ faith and their surrender of themselves to God allows God’s will to be done most fully through them.<sup>73</sup> Such

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<sup>68</sup> Diadochus of Photice, quoted in Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 280.

<sup>69</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 281, 286.

<sup>70</sup> See Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 404.

<sup>71</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 254.

<sup>72</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 3*, 29.

<sup>73</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 539.

expropriation or “unselfing” (*Entselbstung*) occurs through identification with the paschal mystery.<sup>74</sup> As Balthasar insists, “to become a Christian is to come to the Cross.”<sup>75</sup> This was Paul’s experience when he insisted that it was no longer he who lived, but Christ who lived within him (Gal 2:20). It is a death to self, derived from abandonment of all attachments. It is identification with Christ’s paschal mystery.

One of the reasons such total indifference is necessary is that the journey of obedience to God essentially engages with mystery. Premature foreclosure of options for decision may occur unless believers learn the habit of patiently waiting in indifference for God’s will to be revealed. Frequently such waiting requires an alertness to quite small movements of consciousness. Through the ages teachers of discernment have sought to encourage openness to dimensions of reality frequently left unnoticed in the immediate demands and pressures of daily life.

McIntosh cites scriptural and traditional instances of those seeking to encourage their followers to be attentive to experiences beyond their normal ken.<sup>76</sup> John Henry Newman encouraged Christians to develop a mind “hospitable” to mystery, with its attendant participation in the mind of Christ. He developed a “theology of the religious imagination.” Such an imagination has a “living hold on truths” that, even though they are in the world, are not readily apparent.<sup>77</sup> Balthasar’s capacity to see beauty in the depths of a form is consonant with this approach. Also compatible is Balthasar’s call for the development of a capacity for attunement through a “deepening participation in divine life . . . marked by

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<sup>74</sup> For a reflection on Balthasar’s concept of expropriation, see Jeffrey A. Vogel, “The Unselfing Activity of the Holy Spirit in the Theology of Hans Urs Von Balthasar,” *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* (2007): 18. For reflections by a contemporary mystic on the dynamic of “no-self,” see Roberts, *The Path to No-Self*; Bernadette Roberts, *The Experience of No-Self: A Contemplative Journey* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993); Bernadette Roberts, *What is Self? A Study of the Spiritual Journey in Terms of Consciousness* (Boulder, CO: Sentient Publications, 2005).

<sup>75</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 135.

<sup>76</sup> McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth*, 189. McIntosh cites St. Paul, Origen, Ignatius, John Bunyan, and John Henry Newman.

<sup>77</sup> Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, quoted in McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth*, 182.



growing gifts of perception and insight.”<sup>78</sup> I turn now to consider the apophatic dimension of openness to participation in the mystery that is ultimately explicable only in trinitarian terms.<sup>79</sup>

Adequate appreciation of the meaning of a particular form requires engagement with a mysterious dimension of reality.<sup>80</sup> Such engagement requires the acceptance of a dimension of the unknowable at the core of our knowledge. Balthasar states that the failure to accept the dimension of mystery inherent in reality ultimately results in an emphasis on function and an accompanying loss of the appreciation of the depth and beauty at the core of being.<sup>81</sup> Not only must human beings learn to accept an apophatic component to their knowing with respect to things natural but they must also learn to accept it with respect to things supernatural.

The experience of faith is a central feature of this lesson. It opens believers to the apophatic “experience of non-experience.”<sup>82</sup> Believers enter into an experiential sphere wherein their normal ego-based activities become subordinate to Christ.<sup>83</sup> Here the usual realm of clearly recognizable emotions becomes transformed and a new range of emotions difficult to articulate is exposed. This occurs as the willing believer submits ego-based activities more and more to the pattern of self-death that Jesus Christ modeled in the paschal mystery. Balthasar observes that participation in the mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection makes such phenomena possible. Indeed, engagement between God and human beings is only possible because of the paschal mystery. Through the sending of the Holy Spirit, a consequence of Christ’s death and resurrection, believers can participate in the mind of Christ. Participation in the mind of Christ enables relationship with God and with one

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<sup>78</sup> McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth*, 85.

<sup>79</sup> Balthasar, *Two Sisters in the Spirit*, 320.

<sup>80</sup> For Balthasar’s discussion of this issue, see especially Balthasar, *Theo-Logic 1*.

<sup>81</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 447.

<sup>82</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 412-414.

<sup>83</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 227.

another. Love thereby informs knowledge through a connaturality, a felt-sense, of what is the good, true and beautiful choice to be made or thing to be done.<sup>84</sup>

As believers allow themselves to be purified through a moral ascesis, they find themselves participating increasingly in the dynamics of trinitarian life.<sup>85</sup> Considering that such engagement is ultimately a mystery, kataphatic awareness of clearly articulated images gives way to surrender to something “more.” This “more” is inadequately expressed through familiar images of light; it is more satisfactorily expressed in images characterised by paradox and darkness. McIntosh, following Newman, gives the term “trinitarian apophysis” to the practice of personal formation that allows God to shape and form the mind of the subject.<sup>86</sup> Through an appropriate personal formation the shaping of the mind becomes not merely an epistemological matter.<sup>87</sup> There develops an “eschatological or teleological perspective in discernment” with a “taste” for kingdom participation.<sup>88</sup> The subject begins to be aware of, and to cooperate with, a sense of calling towards a life that contributes to the coming of the kingdom of God on earth. The dynamic “from below” thereby meets and engages with that “from above,” providing human fulfilment through participation in God’s impenetrable mystery.<sup>89</sup>

Such transformation enables God’s grace “from above” to engage with the human dynamic “from below.” While Balthasar’s emphasis is always upon the former, the dynamic “from below” is not without significance in his consideration of the factors determining receptivity

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<sup>84</sup> Cf McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth*, 143.

<sup>85</sup> For the observation that “the body can become ‘spiritual’,” see Kallistos Ware, “‘My Helper and My Enemy’: the Body in Greek Christianity,” in *Religion and the Body*, ed. Sarah Coakley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 93.

<sup>86</sup> McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth*, 181ff.

<sup>87</sup> McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth*, 172-173.

<sup>88</sup> McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth*, 82, 122.

<sup>89</sup> McIntosh, *Mystical Theology*, 98; Schindler, *The Dramatic Structure of Truth*, 19. McIntosh here considers Rahner’s thinking on Christological apophaticism. For the observation that Balthasar approaches Jesus’ human consciousness of God in terms of the apophaticism of the Cappadocians and the Carmelites, see McIntosh, *Christology from Within*, 4.

to God's grace. Indeed, anthropological dynamics significantly determine our capacity for receptivity to mystery.

### 3. The Gift of Relationship: A Foundation for Prayer and Mission

While Balthasar's overall approach is not "from below" with its accompanying emphasis on human self-understanding, there is nevertheless a strong anthropological dimension to his thinking.<sup>90</sup> Despite the fact that ontological and Christological factors are foundational for grounding such longings within us, Balthasar avers that those longings also derive from an anthropological base. Balthasar rightly cites our need for relationship with an intimate other, a Thou, for the awakening of consciousness.<sup>91</sup>

Throughout his works Balthasar particularly reflects on the role of the mother in developing an infant's self-awareness. While Balthasar is correct in emphasising the importance of unconditional love and acceptance for human flourishing, the origins for that flourishing need not derive from the mother alone. A father or extended family members who offer consistent love and care can provide the "mirroring," or attunement, that engenders the necessary self-acceptance so essential for an accepting and receptive mode of being in the world. Such mirroring enables individuals to feel understood and accepted because significant others feel empathy towards their feelings and experiences.<sup>92</sup> It is not sufficient merely to be understood; we must feel an empathic connection with another for the ego

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<sup>90</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 2, 9. Balthasar's dispute with Rahner demonstrates his wariness of any approach that would place emphasis upon the human person rather than divine glory. For Balthasar's harsh critique of Rahner and for a discussion of the Balthasar/Rahner debate, see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Moment of Christian Witness*, trans. Richard Beckley (New York: St Paul, 1969); Aidan Nichols, "Rahner and Balthasar: The Anonymous Christianity Debate Revisited," in *Beyond the Blue Glass: Catholic Essays on Faith and Culture* (London: The Saint Austin Press, 2002), 107-128; Rowan Williams, "Balthasar and Rahner," in *The Analogy of Beauty: The Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. John Riches (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986), 11-34; Rowan Williams, "Balthasar and Rahner and the Apprehension of Being," in *Wrestling with Angels: Conversations in Modern Theology*, ed. Mike Higon (London: SCM Press, 2007), 86-105.

<sup>91</sup> This view is supported by neuro-physiological research. For the observation that interpersonal experience impacts upon almost every part of the brain, see Lloyd Linford and John B. Arden, "Brain-based Therapy and the 'Pax Medica'," *Psychotherapy in Australia* 15, no. 3 (2009): 20.

<sup>92</sup> For a discussion of the importance of mirroring in early childhood, see Nathan Schwartz-Salant, *Narcissism and Character Transformation: The Psychology of Narcissistic Character Disorders* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1982), 45-50.

stability that is so important to sustain authentic development.<sup>93</sup> Indeed, research has shown that ongoing loving attunement to a baby has permanent beneficial effects for the growing infant's psychological functioning.<sup>94</sup> Further, through engagement with a loving other not only children but also adults form and confirm their sense of self.

Ultimately, an awareness can develop that one's very self is established through relationship with another.<sup>95</sup> It is not, however, just the mother or the first carer to whom one is indebted for selfhood. Profound interior reflection can issue in a "primal sense of indebtedness" that is satisfied only by the acknowledgement of a transcendent source for one's very being.<sup>96</sup> That transcendent source is to be found in Jesus Christ, namely in one who is ready to communicate with and to affirm the other party in the relationship rather than to stand off in a "transcendent and self-sufficient" mode that would deny the experience of affirmation and the consequent formation of selfhood.<sup>97</sup> Hence, Balthasar's anthropological reflections require Christology for their completion.<sup>98</sup>

Balthasar points to the giftedness implicit in the relationship that wakens us to the possibility of an evolving selfhood. With the gift comes responsibility; it implies a task. That task, Balthasar declares, is a "mission" wherein that which we have received is freely returned.<sup>99</sup> We discover the task, or mission, in the context of relationship with the mystery of Christ and the Church, and in so doing discover the fullness of who we are.<sup>100</sup> Essential for this

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<sup>93</sup> For an interesting reflection on the dynamics of intimacy, see Molly Layton, "The Soul Relationship," *Psychotherapy Networker*, no. January/February (2008): 35-39, 56.

<sup>94</sup> See Linford and Arden, "Brain-based Therapy," 21.

<sup>95</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 3*, 457-458.

<sup>96</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 3*, 458.

<sup>97</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 3*, 458.

<sup>98</sup> See Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 2*, 202.

<sup>99</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 3*, 458.

<sup>100</sup> Note Balthasar's insistence that the subject open to receiving God's word can never be merely an "isolated individual." The authentic subject is always inserted into and encompassed by the body of the Church, whose head is Christ. Insofar as Christ grounds the subject, authentic vocation will always contribute to the Church and her eschatological goals. For Balthasar's discussion of "the subject who receives," see Balthasar, *Glory 7*, 89-103.

discovery is prayer. Prayer enables us to engage with mystery. Balthasar insists there can be “no hiatus of any kind between prayer and the exercise of mission.”<sup>101</sup> Prayer and mission inform one another as the New Testament account of Christ’s constant prayer to the Father exemplifies. For Balthasar the Son’s obedience to the Father is a central Christological mystery that we are called to emulate.<sup>102</sup> Just as a prayerful relationship with God and the fulfilment of his mission were totally integrated for Jesus, so prayer is essential for human receptivity (*Gelassenheit*) to God’s vocational direction.

Victoria Harrison argues that Balthasar’s conception of humanity can best be considered as one of “*homo orans*.”<sup>103</sup> This is so because it is through prayer that we encounter God, and in that encounter find the mission we are called to undertake and thereby find who we are truly called to be. Balthasar argues for the “necessity” of contemplative prayer.<sup>104</sup> The necessity arises from our foundational structure, a structure wherein we are designed for relationship with God who seeks to take the initiative in relating to us.<sup>105</sup> That initiative is expressed through God’s word to which we are called to listen. For Balthasar contemplative prayer really means “hearing” the word, a hearing that requires reverence and adoration and can result in hearing a unique “utterance of God” that is spoken to just this particular praying individual.<sup>106</sup> Hence, in contrast to the contemplative tradition which tends to privilege seeing, Balthasar gives primacy to hearing.<sup>107</sup>

Balthasar follows Ignatius in encouraging those who would learn from Christ to put themselves imaginatively into the mysteries that scripture depicts. Being attentive to God’s

<sup>101</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 3, 170.

<sup>102</sup> Balthasar, *Our Task*, 19.

<sup>103</sup> Victoria S. Harrison, “*Homo Orans*: von Balthasar’s Christocentric Philosophical Anthropology,” *The Heythrop Journal* 40, no. 3 (1999): 280.

<sup>104</sup> See Balthasar, *Prayer*, 11-26. For the observation that Balthasar’s reflections on prayer go to the “heart of mission,” see Henrici, “A Sketch of His Life,” 32.

<sup>105</sup> Balthasar, *Prayer*, 12.

<sup>106</sup> Balthasar, *Prayer*, 68.

<sup>107</sup> While this emphasis is throughout *Prayer*, see also Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life*, 393-394.

speaking requires that we attend to the data of consciousness which such meditation generates. It then requires obedience. Balthasar argues that it is not sufficient to hear; one must also act on one's hearing. A failure to do so will lead to a failure in correspondence with the idea that God has for that individual.<sup>108</sup> Prayer is essential for the cooperation with grace that issues in the discovery and expression of the idea in one's life. Balthasar refers not only to worship, praise, thanksgiving or petitionary prayer. His concern is also with the "most basic" form of prayer whereby intercession pleads for freedom from the "masks of the empirical 'I' behind which my true 'I'—unknown even to myself—remains hidden."<sup>109</sup> We must be prepared to give reduced priority, if not to abandon, the aspirations that derive from a "finite, empirical 'I,'" with its "masks, roles and costumes" and be prepared to "quit the world's stage." Our focus must be not on performing for a human audience; it must be on playing the role allotted by the "sole Master of the world play."<sup>110</sup>

Balthasar here distinguishes between a false, empirical "I" and a true "I," an inner self that can appear alien to the former. The roles we assume, the various personas we adopt, the life-goals we determine for ourselves apart from God—all these create accretions that hide our essential selves. Suffering in cooperation with the grace of God, a process of being "stripped," enables the true, inner self to be revealed. Only this true "I" supports the authentic subjectivity so essential for cooperation with grace and for the growing discovery of who one is called to be, and what one is called to do, in God. Prayer is essential for the abandonment that enables perseverance in the face of the demands of the unique journey God calls each person to make.<sup>111</sup>

Balthasar recognises the difficulty of pursuing an interiority that gives primacy to contemplation over action. Indeed, it calls for "strenuous interiorization."<sup>112</sup> Fallen nature

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<sup>108</sup> Balthasar, *Prayer*, 18.

<sup>109</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 2*, 292.

<sup>110</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 2*, 304.

<sup>111</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 5*, 49.

<sup>112</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 454.

offers resistance, for it is called to be and to become something that is not naturally spontaneous. Balthasar affirms that it is only through the prior identification of relationship with the communion of saints that we can overcome our egotistic, self-regard.<sup>113</sup> A persistent endeavour to lose such egotism will issue in an experience of integration and authenticity, and to the degree that such a life is lived in faith, hope and love, it becomes a holy life.<sup>114</sup> Through contemplative prayer and abandonment to God in the details of daily life, an increasing renunciation of the self can occur.<sup>115</sup>

The journey towards vocation entails a transformation of consciousness that allows cooperation with grace such that an identified vocation is the outcome of a series of identifiable, as well as unidentifiable, decisions. A reflection on vocation from this point of view will take into account the way in which consciousness shifts from an egocentric focus to a self-transcending focus. The first condition for such self-transcendence is the awareness that one's own self is given. An important accompanying insight is that such givenness can only occur within infinite freedom.<sup>116</sup> This experience and understanding have decisive consequences: finite freedom "must choose its own "idea," an idea that exists within the "primal Idea" (*Urdee*) of the incarnate Son within whom all ideas exist.<sup>117</sup> In finding one's idea, one begins the journey towards becoming fully all that one is meant to be. For Balthasar that means the journey to full personhood. As I noted earlier, even in his

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<sup>113</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 3, 270. For a recent reflection on surrendering egoistic domination, see Vogel, "The Unselfing Activity of the Holy Spirit in the Theology of Hans Urs Von Balthasar," 16-34.

<sup>114</sup> Harrison, "*Homo Orans*."; Victoria S. Harrison, "Human Holiness as Religious Shape Apologia," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 46, no. 2 (1999); Harrison, "Personal Identity and Integration: von Balthasar's Phenomenology of Human Holiness."; Victoria S. Harrison, *The Apologetic Value of Human Holiness: Von Balthasar's Christocentric Philosophical Anthropology* (Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000).

<sup>115</sup> See Balthasar, *Prayer*, 50ff; Harrison, "Personal Identity and Integration: von Balthasar's Phenomenology of Human Holiness," 424; Vogel, "The Unselfing Activity of the Holy Spirit in the Theology of Hans Urs Von Balthasar," 16-34.

<sup>116</sup> For Balthasar's discussion of the self as gift, see Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 2, 285-291. For a postmodern development of Balthasar's perspective, see Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

<sup>117</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 2, 284-285, 302.

*Aesthetics* Balthasar had prepared the way for the notion he develops in his *TheoDramatics*.

In the former Balthasar identified a person with the “form” that shapes an individual:

What is a person without the form that shapes him . . . a life-form . . . chosen for his life, a form into which and through which to pour out his life, so that his life becomes the soul of the form.<sup>118</sup>

Hence, a person becomes such by pouring his or her life into a particular form, which for Balthasar takes the form of mission. Balthasar thereby connects the whole dynamic between election, vocation and mission with finding one’s identity in the discovery of one’s mission.<sup>119</sup>

While the possibility for the latter derives from our foundational immersion in Jesus Christ, nevertheless, Balthasar argues that “everything begins with the child’s being addressed by a Thou” and in the gift of love being awakened to a free subjectivity.<sup>120</sup> In being so awakened, there develops, Balthasar says, an awareness of having been entrusted with a mission, for what has been given must be transformed and freely given back.<sup>121</sup> In the process an individual becomes a supernaturally unique person who partakes of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4). Balthasar is explicit. He is “reserving the concept ‘person’ for the the supernatural uniqueness of the [one] who has been called into a relationship of intimacy with God.”<sup>122</sup> Such a one was previously merely an “individual of the species at the natural level,” but through acceptance of mission now enters into a supernatural relationship with God.<sup>123</sup> In other words, Balthasar defines a “person” from a theological perspective, a perspective determined by his or her relationship with Jesus Christ.<sup>124</sup> Ultimately, Balthasar concludes, to

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<sup>118</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 23-24.

<sup>119</sup> See Balthasar, *Glory 3*, 263ff., 371; Balthasar, *Glory 4*, 62.

<sup>120</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 3*, 457.

<sup>121</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 3*, 458.

<sup>122</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 2*, 402. For Balthasar’s more nuanced elaboration of this issue, see Balthasar, “On the Concept of the Person,” 18; Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 2*, 403-404.

<sup>123</sup> See Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 2*, 402.

<sup>124</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 3*, 496, 509.



be a person is to be in the service of the Trinity in the concrete circumstances of one's historical situation.<sup>125</sup> The Holy Spirit is essential for such service.

#### 4. The Holy Spirit and Mystery

Mystery lies at the heart of one's call and mission.<sup>126</sup> Central to that mystery is the Holy Spirit. Balthasar refers to the Holy Spirit as "the unknown" that is understandable only through the mystery of love.<sup>127</sup> The Spirit's task is to reveal the Son and not to point to himself. Hence, the hidden, self-effacing dimension of the Holy Spirit can mean that the Spirit is ignored, a situation that Balthasar laments has occurred all too frequently, with the exception of the Fathers, the great scholastics, the mystics and spiritual writers. In contrast to those who argue that Balthasar is Christocentrically oriented at the cost of pneumatology, Balthasar insists on attentiveness to the Holy Spirit: "It would be decisively important for us not to forget how to look on the Logos with pneumatic eyes."<sup>128</sup>

Through the Holy Spirit Christ is revealed as attractive and hence, so Balthasar argues, as a means of motivating to action, for perceived beauty elicits a response. The Spirit both illumines the form of Christ such that he appears enrapturingly beautiful, and also provides the power to impress Christ's form upon the believer. The capacity of the form of Christ to illuminate by its own inherent power, objectively present and Holy Spirit given, is most significant. Balthasar argues that an objective light is revealed by the historical Jesus in the writings of scripture and in the Church, and that it bears its own "interior rightness and evidential power."<sup>129</sup> Hence, through the Holy Spirit believers are transformed by the objective power of the form's capacity to impress itself upon them. While it is valuable to look at the ways in which we can actively prepare ourselves to see the form of Christ and to

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<sup>125</sup> Schindler, "Introduction," 297.

<sup>126</sup> Sicari, "Mission, Ascesis, Crisis," 340.

<sup>127</sup> See Hans Urs von Balthasar, "The Holy Spirit as Love," in *Explorations in Theology III: Spiritus Creator* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993); Hans Urs von Balthasar, "The Unknown Lying Beyond the Word," in *Explorations in Theology III: Spiritus Creator* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 105-116.

<sup>128</sup> Balthasar, "The Unknown Lying Beyond the Word," 115.

<sup>129</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 465.

respond obediently, ultimately both seeing and responding are the fruit of grace whereby God bestows the capacity to appreciate God's glory upon the perceptually impoverished human being.<sup>130</sup>

Insights into the trinitarian mystery of relationship between Father, Son and Spirit further an appreciation of the Holy Spirit. While Balthasar reflects on the Holy Spirit in the first two parts of his trilogy, his thinking on the Spirit is presented most comprehensively in the third volume of his *Theo-Logic*. Recognising that some might wonder what the Spirit has to do with logic or with theological truth, he reminds his reader that Jesus had said, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth."<sup>131</sup> The Spirit enables Christians to be attentive to Christ, for the "Spirit is breath . . . the seeing eye of grace in us."<sup>132</sup> The Spirit enables contact between ourselves and the divine mystery we contemplate:

[The Spirit] is simultaneously present in the objective mystery on which we meditate and in the subjective depths of our own selves as the bridge that leads us over the mystery . . . a Spirit who "sets in motion" (Rom 8:14) . . . and who "drives out" (Mk 1:12), who . . . instills in us an awareness of the ever-greater God.<sup>133</sup>

Hence, insofar as the Holy Spirit unites us with that upon which we meditate and enables us to act upon our reflections, the Spirit is essential to our awareness of God's direction in our lives, to our decision-making and to our action. The Spirit is an integral part of our experience of consciousness. While ultimately the way in which the Holy Spirit and our own consciousness engage is a mystery, we nevertheless can investigate the human experience of engagement with God. Balthasar highlights specific attributes of the Holy Spirit which will assist us to explore our human experience of the Spirit. He points to the Holy Spirit as gift, as engendering freedom and as evoking testimony.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 2*, 21.

<sup>131</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic 3*, 17.

<sup>132</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology 3: Spiritus Creator* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 111.

<sup>133</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Christian Meditation* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 31.

<sup>134</sup> See Balthasar, *Theo-Logic 3*, 223-249.

Citing numerous scriptural references to the gift that God offers humanity, Balthasar refers first to Rom 5:5, "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."<sup>135</sup> Balthasar's reflections on trinitarian self-giving inform his thinking on the nature of the gift and its pertinence to our understanding of the Holy Spirit.<sup>136</sup> Balthasar follows the teaching of the Fourth Lateran Council. Without losing his Godhead, the Father gives the fullness of his self to the Son, and not merely some essence apart from the person of the Father. Similarly, the Son totally surrenders in obedience to the Father. There is a mutual interpenetration in loving surrender, a mutuality received as gift and which yields the fruit of an "unfathomable *more*."<sup>137</sup> That "more" is the Holy Spirit, who is thereby characterised by the quality of gift. The Holy Spirit is both the act of love between the Father and Son and the outcome of that act.<sup>138</sup> Kenosis and gift interpenetrate. The gift of the Father's total self-surrender and of the Son's obedience unto death achieves a "miracle of the Spirit" which then indwells humanity.<sup>139</sup> The Spirit can then lead, enabling a walking in the Spirit that nevertheless sets free, the possibility for which Balthasar grounds in trinitarian self-giving.

This observation leads Balthasar to a discussion of the relationship between the uncreated grace of the Spirit and the Spirit's "inner operation" in humanity through created grace.<sup>140</sup> Just as the Father hands over both divinity and freedom to the Son, so analogously humanity is endowed with both "self-subsistence and freedom."<sup>141</sup> Just as the "otherness of Father and Son" coexist, so there exists also an otherness of God and creature.<sup>142</sup> Yet there nevertheless

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<sup>135</sup> Balthasar also refers to 2 Cor 1:22, 5:5; 1 Jn 3:24, 4:13; Jn 3:34, for which see Balthasar, *Theo-Logic* 3, 223.

<sup>136</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic* 3, 225ff. Balthasar here heralds postmodern reflection on the nature of the gift. See, for example, Robyn Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida and the Limits of Phenomenology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001); Marion, *Being Given*.

<sup>137</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic* 3, 226-227. Emphasis original.

<sup>138</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic* 3, 242.

<sup>139</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic* 3, 230-231.

<sup>140</sup> For an extended reflection on Balthasar's concept of the relationship between nature and grace, see Angelo Scola, "Nature and Grace in Hans Urs von Balthasar," *Communio* 18 (1991): 207-226.

<sup>141</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic* 3, 231.

<sup>142</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic* 3, 234.

occurs a divinisation through the impress of God through the Spirit. Balthasar succinctly expresses this dynamic and its ensuing conceptual difficulties:

Looking from below upward, as St. Thomas likes to do, we can say that human virtues and habits (*habitus*) are transformed, whereas, looking from above downward, it is more that the divine qualities express themselves in the created spiritual being. It is impossible to squeeze these two ways of viewing the mystery of God's indwelling in the creature into a single comprehensive system.<sup>143</sup>

With Balthasar, I acknowledge the difficulty of looking at the dynamic from both below and above at the same time. Hence, in subsequent chapters I will place the emphasis upon the former, upon the transformation of human virtues and habits and upon the dynamics of consciousness operative in attending to the teleological dimensions of such transformation, a transformation that can issue in vocation and mission. For now, however, we continue to consider the different ways in which Balthasar reflects on the Holy Spirit.

As well as being a gift, the Holy Spirit also engenders freedom: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor 3:17).<sup>144</sup> Balthasar notes that such freedom is present in the Trinity.<sup>145</sup> Given that everything is actuated through the Spirit, the capacity to attend to God's unique will for an individual's call will be a matter of attending to the Spirit.<sup>146</sup> Yet, while Christ exercises an a priori obedience to the Father in the Spirit, such is not the case for humanity. As Balthasar emphasises, sin, with its consequent requirement of a choice between "flesh" and "spirit," creates a "problem."<sup>147</sup> The Council of Orange addressed this difficulty in its statement, "Without the illumination and inspiration of the Holy Spirit . . . fallen nature is unable freely to choose the divine."<sup>148</sup> Augustine observes that humanity is increasingly free in proportion to the degree that the Spirit brings healing. In so doing, the

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<sup>143</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic* 3, 234-235.

<sup>144</sup> Other examples are: Rom 8:2; Jn 3:8; 1 Cor 2:12, 15, for which see Balthasar, *Theo-Logic* 3, 224.

<sup>145</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic* 3, 237.

<sup>146</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic* 3, 238.

<sup>147</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic* 3, 239.

<sup>148</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic* 3, 240.

Holy Spirit enables humanity to be abandoned to divine mercy. Balthasar summarises Augustine's position:

[T]he Spirit, with his grace, frees man so that he can grasp his genuine human freedom, which, however, he only attains by consenting to that freedom of the divine love that indwells him.<sup>149</sup>

Only within the context of divine and absolute freedom, a freedom characterised by love, is human freedom perfected.

It is at this point that Balthasar considers he has reached the limits of theological reflection. He must here acknowledge the mystery of love. Balthasar cites Adrienne von Speyr's reflection that love takes priority over knowledge and expresses itself not in conceptual considerations but in worship. It exposes us to the "deep mystery of freedom that is anchored in the very trinitarian being of God."<sup>150</sup> For Balthasar the concept of self-surrender through love takes priority as a means for understanding the Trinity. Sacrificial self-surrender always issues in freedom for another, demonstrated, for example, by the parental self-sacrifice which gives their children freedom. Pre-eminently, it is demonstrated by Jesus Christ in his sacrificial self-giving for the Church.<sup>151</sup>

The Holy Spirit is not only a gift; nor does the Spirit offer only freedom. The Holy Spirit also provides testimony. Through the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit Christians are enabled to become witnesses, for the Spirit gives them the words necessary for giving testimony.<sup>152</sup> The idea of testimony refers to both inner and outer witness. Human beings can experience an inner testimony within their consciousness when, for example, the Spirit bears witness within their spirits that they are children of God (Rom 8:16). The Spirit also bears witness outwardly, to the extent that the world is convicted by it, for when the Spirit comes, "he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment" (Jn 16:8). All three concepts interpenetrate and derive from the Spirit's place in the Trinity.

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<sup>149</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic* 3, 240.

<sup>150</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic* 3, 241.

<sup>151</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic* 3, 242.

<sup>152</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic* 3, 249.

Balthasar reflects on the Spirit's testimony from the point of view of the two-fold form of love as both the love of the Father and Son and also the effect of that love. Both the Incarnation and the Church's structure reveal the "two-in-one" nature of the work of the Holy Spirit. Balthasar considers the joint work of both Christ and the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church and in believers.<sup>153</sup> For Balthasar the "community of believers is true to its nature only when it lives as a called-out body, when it opens up and goes out to the world."<sup>154</sup> Through the work of the Spirit and of Christ a follower of Christ participates with Christ in the paschal mystery, which leads to the death of egocentricity and a consequent capacity for indifference.<sup>155</sup> Such death yields a facility for obedience to the Spirit's leading. It also calls for the fruit of witness in the new life that is given. Balthasar acknowledges the apparent paradox of being both liberated and called to obedience. The resolution to the paradox derives from the fact that Christ's obedience to the Father is consonant with his total freedom. Inasmuch as disciples are in Christ, they also experience the paradox of both the obedience of love and utter freedom.

In the exercise of their vocation and mission believers can, however, experience a tension between their Holy Spirit given call and the institutional Church. Balthasar recognises that there exists a "delicate relationship" between the institution and pneuma, or between the "official ministerial order and community charisms."<sup>156</sup> It is, he argues, a tension derived from our limited human view for from the perspective of the Spirit, in whom there is only unity, there is no tension. Acknowledging the potential conflict between office and charism, Balthasar calls for mutual respect. One means of reducing this tension is for believers to develop a sound basis for discerning their call, a matter to which I turn once again.

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<sup>153</sup> See Balthasar, *Theo-Logic 3*, 242-245.

<sup>154</sup> Vogel, "The Unselfing Activity of the Holy Spirit in the Theology of Hans Urs Von Balthasar," 31.

<sup>155</sup> For the argument that, in a spiritual journey carried to its ultimate end, identification with Christ on the cross can yield a death not only of ego-awareness but also of self-awareness, see Roberts, *What is Self?*

<sup>156</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic 3*, 245, 248.

While love is required for the Holy Spirit's operation, a question arises: how does one distinguish between natural love and the love of God that indwells and impels a human being towards a particular vocational expression? In other words, how does one differentiate between a natural and a supernatural impulsion?<sup>157</sup> It is not sufficient to appeal to St. Thomas' "gifts of the Holy Spirit" as a resolution to the problem, for they also require faith and discernment. Balthasar suggests there may be "internal evidence of the Spirit," derived from "the whole thrust of our believing and surrendered existence."<sup>158</sup> He appeals to the First Letter of St. John and observes that confident knowledge of the Spirit's anointing coexists with a faith-filled life lived in love of God and of neighbour, in loving adherence to the commandments, in humble awareness of the need for forgiveness, and in perseverance with the demands of the Christian journey. Balthasar is firm: "It is utterly impossible for the Christian to be taught by the Spirit and to receive his testimony unless he is carrying out the commandment of love in his whole life."<sup>159</sup> The seeing that is the graced experience of the poor in spirit and the pure in heart derives only from a life lived in obedience to God's revelation.<sup>160</sup>

The "whole" life that Balthasar envisages, and which is so necessary for discernment, results in a particular experience of the Holy Spirit. Balthasar cites Jean Mouroux who identifies three levels of religious experience. The first is the empirical level, characterised primarily by feelings of consolation, enthusiasm and emotion. A second level comprises those religious experiences derived through the exercise of particular techniques. The third level is what Mouroux refers to as *experiential*, and it is the most important. Balthasar, observing that the French term translated here as experiential is difficult to translate, cites Mouroux's definition: "an experience that arises from the totality of the person's life."<sup>161</sup> The "totality"

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<sup>157</sup> For Balthasar's reflection upon the various spiritual circumstances that call for discernment of spirits and for the problems that can arise in charismatic circles, see Balthasar, *Theo-Logic 3*, 385-405.

<sup>158</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic 3*, 381.

<sup>159</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic 3*, 382. For further reflection on the witness that a whole life can offer, see Balthasar, *Theo-Logic 3*, 405-411.

<sup>160</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 7*, 14-15.

<sup>161</sup> Jean Mouroux, quoted in Balthasar, *Theo-Logic 3*, 382.

of such a life expresses itself in the simplicity of a life lived in faith and in the integration of everything both within and without. There is an ecclesial dimension to such a life for “the objective, ecclesial Spirit and the subjective Holy Spirit are one.”<sup>162</sup> Since Mary demonstrates the archetypal experience of faith concomitant with the “total achievement, the total stance, of a life,” Balthasar considers her to be the best exemplar of this life.<sup>163</sup>

Balthasar reflects on the philosophy of perception to demonstrate his point that discernment arises from actions congruent with a life totally committed to the revelation of Jesus Christ. In Heideggerian fashion he observes that when confronted with an object we not only see sensory details but also make intellectual connections and develop an overall impression.<sup>164</sup> He applies this position to spiritual seeing. Such seeing cannot be separated from faith in and love for Jesus Christ and for God revealed in him. Nor can it be separated from the command to love one’s neighbour. In this context the faithful Christian has the capacity to perceive the spontaneous offer of Christ’s revelation of himself. Such perception comprises “a becoming aware, a hearing, which then – step by step – penetrates the sphere of understanding.”<sup>165</sup> Balthasar here points to the importance of careful attentiveness to an experiential dimension of one’s consciousness that, in the first instance, has no concepts. Only gradually does understanding arise. I turn now to reflect on some epistemological considerations inherent in life lived according to the Spirit.

### 5. Human Consciousness and Some Epistemological Considerations

Balthasar describes human consciousness from the point of view of an individual’s personal experience. He does not explain human consciousness by using terms and relations that are independent of the human perspective. Nevertheless, his descriptive account provides a good introduction to the answer to the second question of our study, namely “how human consciousness can be receptive to mystery at the core of a person’s being.”

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<sup>162</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic* 3, 383-384.

<sup>163</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic* 3, 384-385.

<sup>164</sup> Balthasar, *Glory* 7, 287.

<sup>165</sup> Balthasar, *Glory* 7, 288.



Balthasar refers to our experience of being open to “being-in-its-totality.”<sup>166</sup> While we constantly experience limitations and restrictions in everyday life, we nevertheless also have a direct, irrefutable experience of freedom that, while limited, is moving always “toward freedom.”<sup>167</sup> Reflecting on our experience of consciousness, Balthasar observes that when I confidently understand something about an object, self-awareness accompanies the act and there occurs a consciousness of being present to myself. This consciousness allows me to know that “I am” and also to be “open to all being.”<sup>168</sup> Thus, the self-possession consequent upon the experience that I am occurs concurrently with openness to being.<sup>169</sup>

Balthasar believes that appropriately self-possessed, finite freedom attains its full development in a humble relationship with absolute freedom.<sup>170</sup> The right relationship between the two poles of finite and infinite freedom ensures an experience of freedom for the human being. The complementary dimensions of self-possession and openness, Balthasar asserts, constitute the first pole of the structure of finite freedom.<sup>171</sup> The terms indifference, indebtedness, or transcendence are variously applied to the second pole of finite freedom.<sup>172</sup> This second pole of finite freedom derives from the first, for the consequence of openness to being is that we must leave an egocentric self behind in the

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<sup>166</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 2*, 389. For the observation that “the human intellect . . . is naturally ordered . . . to the whole of being as intelligible and hence it can ultimately be satisfied only by knowing directly the infinite source and fullness of all being, namely, God,” see Clarke, *Person and Being*, 36.

<sup>167</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 2*, 207. Emphasis original.

<sup>168</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 3*, 36; Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 2*, 207-208; Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 4*, 149. Balthasar argues, following Augustine, that for this to occur there must be a “light that discloses the first principles of all being and its transcendental qualities as things that are both true and good,” for which see Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 2*, 208.

<sup>169</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 2*, 211.

<sup>170</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 2*, 213, 242.

<sup>171</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 2*, 210-211.

<sup>172</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 3*, 36; Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 2*, 200, 228; Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 4*, 149.

detached pursuit of value rather than gratification.<sup>173</sup> Freedom consequently derives from acknowledging our indebtedness to absolute freedom rather than from choosing the deceptive “freedom” of being our own origin.<sup>174</sup> In choosing to be indebted to absolute freedom we enable the appropriately self-possessed ego to maintain a humble attitude before the greater self, recognising that “the part . . . loves the whole more than itself.”<sup>175</sup> In so doing finite freedom finds its fulfilment.<sup>176</sup> Such fulfilment is aided by the capacity of infinite freedom to inscribe instruction internally upon finite freedom.<sup>177</sup> It is an understanding of this dimension that will contribute to an answer to the second of our questions, namely how human consciousness is receptive to mystery.

Balthasar considers the issue by exploring further the nature of finite freedom and the conditions which enable it to receive the instruction of infinite freedom. As I discussed previously, Balthasar recognises that the possibility for insight into the glory, goodness and truth of the Creator presumes an ontological infrastructure on the part of beings in the world.<sup>178</sup> He elaborates on this philosophical observation by offering a psychological account of human consciousness. Adopting a faculty psychology, Balthasar argues that isomorphic with this infrastructure must be a “permanent, living unity of the theoretical, ethical and aesthetic attitudes” within the observing and participating subject in order for him or her to

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<sup>173</sup> For Balthasar’s reference to this second pole as “autonomy,” see Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 2, 174; Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 3, 36. Balthasar refers to “*autoexousion*” as consent to oneself in the freedom of self-possession for which see Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 2, 242.

<sup>174</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 3, 36.

<sup>175</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 2, 211.

<sup>176</sup> Balthasar constantly repeats the refrain that finite freedom finds its fulfilment within infinite freedom, for which see, for example, Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 2, 284, 292, 302, 303.

<sup>177</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 2, 284-285.

<sup>178</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic* 1, 7.

know being.<sup>179</sup> For Balthasar the theoretical attitude enables access to truth, the ethical attitude enables access to goodness, and the aesthetic attitude enables access to beauty.<sup>180</sup>

While acknowledging that the attitudes are formally distinct, Balthasar nevertheless insists that discussion of one involves each of the other attitudes.<sup>181</sup> He does not go on, as we shall, to identify the source of “their common root and constant interplay” (*ihre gemeinsame Wurzel und ihr beständiges Ineinanderspiel*) in the self-transcending dynamic of intentionality within the human person.<sup>182</sup> Nevertheless, his subsequent considerations are congruent with the argument I will present in the following chapter. Balthasar considers that the unity of the three attitudes, with its consequent ramifications for decision-making and action, grounds a philosophical approach to theological problems.<sup>183</sup> Thus, Balthasar opines that reality requires engagement with the human subject’s consciousness for its appropriation; consciousness thereby plays an essential role in Balthasar’s notion of the objectivity of reality.<sup>184</sup>

The question now arises as to how Balthasar deals epistemologically with the mystery of spiritual realities, for it has implications for the resolution of our foundational existential self-question. Balthasar’s understanding of the mystery of being, the mystery of that which is, provides the context for our reflections. He considers that decisive meaning only emerges where the mystery of being is appreciated as filling and indwelling a form.”<sup>185</sup> For the

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<sup>179</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic 1*, 29. For the original German, “*auch nur eine dauernde lebendige Einheit der theoretischen, ethischen und ästhetischen Haltung wahre Erkenntnis des Seins vermitteln kann*,” see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theologik: Erster Band: Wahrheit der Welt* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1985), 18.

<sup>180</sup> Note that Balthasar places the attitudes in this order. Lacking a satisfactory analysis of intentionality, he does not place the attitudes, as Lonergan would, in the order of aesthetic, theoretical and ethical, that is to say, attitudes that derive from the intentional dynamism that moves through being attentive to beauty, intelligent and reasonable about truth, and responsible about ethical action. For a consideration of this approach to intentionality, see the work of Bernard Lonergan, which is addressed in the next chapter.

<sup>181</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic 1*, 29.

<sup>182</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic 1*, 29. For the German see Balthasar, *Theologik I*, 18.

<sup>183</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic 1*, 29.

<sup>184</sup> Schindler, *The Dramatic Structure of Truth*, 99.

<sup>185</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 500.

Christian God is the source of that mystery, effecting a “substratum of unknowing” (*Untergrund des Nichtwissens*) and a “mystery-zone of Being” (*Geheimniszone des Seins*) at the heart of the world.<sup>186</sup> Balthasar insists that we are not to bracket out the “unknowable” in our concept of knowledge. To insist on merely cognitive categories for understanding will effect a “shallow functionalism” that destroys the perception of depth.<sup>187</sup> Balthasar objects to the loss of the “depth-dimension of being,” wherein approaches to reality fail to acknowledge the mystery at the heart of the transcendentals of beauty, goodness and truth.<sup>188</sup> Our notion of human subjects must, he argues, include a dynamic that not only encompasses the known but, through self-transcendence, also exposes human subjects to a realm of the unknown, a realm of transcendence. This realm is accessed through faith.

Balthasar sees faith as both aesthetic cognition and dramatic participation in Christ. Human nature and all its capacities ultimately find their “true centre” in Christ.<sup>189</sup> Such a position has implications for faith, which thereby becomes the “cognitive horizon” opened up to humanity through Christian revelation. Faith, Balthasar says, issues in a form of knowledge.<sup>190</sup> His insistence on the value of beauty for a revelation of God’s glory has epistemological implications. Davies observes that Balthasar’s avowal that “aesthetics is intimately connected with truth, goodness, and the depths of Christian revelation” means that aesthetics is also intimately connected with knowledge, albeit in a “radical and transforming sense.”<sup>191</sup> Davies points to the similarity between Balthasar’s epistemology and that of Hans-Georg Gadamer, for both Balthasar and Gadamer disagree with the Kantian perspective that rejects the contribution of aesthetics to the revelation of truth.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 446. See also Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit I*, 429.

<sup>187</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 447.

<sup>188</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic 1*, 16-17.

<sup>189</sup> Balthasar, "Theology and Sanctity," 195. For a discussion of Balthasar’s views of nature and grace, see Scola, "Nature and Grace in Hans Urs von Balthasar," 207-226.

<sup>190</sup> Scola, "Nature and Grace in Hans Urs von Balthasar," 225.

<sup>191</sup> Davies, "Theological Aesthetics," 133.

<sup>192</sup> See Davies, "Theological Aesthetics," 11n12.

Hence, the fact that human beings participate in the mystery of God has both epistemological and existential consequences. There are epistemological consequences, for human beings need to learn to be open to an apophatic dimension of unknowing in their experience and understanding. There are existential consequences, for they need also to learn to surrender to, and be receptive to, mystery and its formative impact upon their concrete living. For Balthasar epistemological and existential implications are intimately connected.

Perceiving the mystery present at the heart of things is not a matter of “seeing” something “in here” anymore than seeing the glory of God in a beautiful form is a matter of seeing something “out there.”<sup>193</sup> Balthasar repeatedly rejects a naïve realist perspective:

When inquiring into truth, one could hardly make a more fateful assumption than to suppose that objects form a self-contained world that has no essential, and at best only an accidental, need of the world of subjects.<sup>194</sup>

Balthasar argues that truth derives only from the interaction between the object and the subject. He illustrates this philosophical position through considering a work of art:

A work of art can be grasped objectively only within a certain subjectivity which corresponds to the work, and an analysis of its objective structure presupposes that such a realisation of its content has at least occurred at some time even if such a moment has passed. In more general terms we can say that colours, sounds, scents exist only in the sense organs that perceive them, and because this variegated world as a whole arises in living beings and spirits, we may say that the world can unfold and exhibit its objectivity precisely in the medium of subjects.<sup>195</sup>

Balthasar explicitly distances himself from the position of the naïve realist who “attributes to all these sense qualities an existence in themselves.”<sup>196</sup> It is because relationship between

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<sup>193</sup> For the observation that Balthasar’s “dramatic sense of truth...requires that reality not be seen simply as ‘out there,’” see Schindler, *The Dramatic Structure of Truth*, 99.

<sup>194</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic 1*, 62.

<sup>195</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 535. Note that Balthasar adheres to a postmodern perspective that the appropriation of the “present” relies on memory.

<sup>196</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 535. Note that Balthasar acknowledges that the naïve realist suffers a shock at the eventual realisation of the “non-existence of the world in which he had ‘believed,’” for which see Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 535. For a similar reflection see Lonergan’s reference to the “startling strangeness” of the insight into critical realism, for which see Richard M. Liddy, *Startling Strangeness: Reading Lonergan’s Insight* (Washington: University Press of America, 2006); Lonergan, *Insight*, xxviii. For a reflection on, and rejection of, the possible

subject and object is necessary for the appropriation of truth that the latter possesses, in Balthasar's view, what has been called a "dramatic structure."<sup>197</sup>

Balthasar applies this philosophical position to the dynamics of human engagement with scripture. Scripture is not merely "God's Word to the Church"; it is the "expression of faith's reflection on historical revelation."<sup>198</sup> Hence, scripture is not an object "out there" to be received by a subject "in here." It is the fruit of a subject's contemplative, faith-filled reflection; it is the fruit of participatory dynamics. Balthasar insists that divine revelation must be received by the "womb of human faith" and through "contemplation by faith."<sup>199</sup> He rejects the "naïve realism" that imagines the "covenant-partnership as the simple encounter of a speaking and a listening person, a commanding and an obeying person."<sup>200</sup> Such a position can analogously be applied to the dynamics of hearing God's call. The revelation of God's call to an individual will be the fruit of contemplative, faith-filled reflection aided by the Holy Spirit.

Foundational to the achievement of a simple, integrated life lived in faith, hope and love is authenticity. We therefore turn now to Bernard Lonergan who has articulated major aspects of the dimensions comprising such a life. Lonergan's generalised empirical method of intentionality analysis can contribute to the questions that arise in an attempt to articulate the dynamics of attentiveness to the gift of the Holy Spirit.

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charge against Balthasar of naïve realism, see Robert M. Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 124-125.

<sup>197</sup> Hence, the title of the work by Schindler, *The Dramatic Structure of Truth*. Note that I stress Balthasar's rejection of naïve realism and his adherence to a critically realist position because adherents of Bernard Lonergan, to be discussed in the next chapter, often reject Balthasar on the basis of a misconceived idea that his is not a critically realist position.

<sup>198</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 536.

<sup>199</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 536.

<sup>200</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 537.

## 6. Summary and Conclusion

While Hans Urs von Balthasar recognises that human beings are oriented to mystery and that consequently their fulfilment derives from participation in that mystery, such participation relies upon adequate receptivity to the mystery. In this chapter I have drawn on Balthasar to identify ontological, Christological and anthropological dimensions that provide the foundations for receptivity to God's grace and leading. A foundational condition for receptivity is the believer's readiness for the self-renunciation and indifference that is consequent upon identification with Christ's journey to the cross. It is the Holy Spirit who enables this identification. Given that the foundations for receptivity are present in the human person, the question then arises as to how human consciousness engages with the Holy Spirit in the pursuit of God's will.

Balthasar discusses the epistemological bases for the receptive cooperation of human consciousness with reality. However, his account is descriptive rather than explanatory. He provides only a faculty psychology in his account of human consciousness, which appropriates the true, good and beautiful by means of a unity of three attitudes. In the next chapter I argue that Bernard Lonergan's intentionality analysis offers a more satisfactory explanation for the human person's capacity to be open to both natural and supernatural reality.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE SELF-TRANSCENDING HUMAN PERSON

In the last two chapters we have considered, among other things, the way in which Hans Urs von Balthasar addresses the first question of this study. We explored why the discovery of one's vocation resolves the foundational existential self-question, "Who am I?" While Balthasar approaches the question "Who am I?" from a Christological and interpersonal point of view, Bernard Lonergan approaches it from a psychological point of view, from the point of view of a subject in a "stream of consciousness."<sup>1</sup> Lonergan, another Ignatian-formed theologian, asks what it is to "be oneself."<sup>2</sup>

We have also considered the second question that this study addresses, namely how it is that we can engage with mystery. Even though Balthasar recognises that our capacity to perceive the mystery of beauty, truth and goodness implicit in creation derives from a unified consciousness, he is unable to offer anything other than a descriptive account of this unity. The exigence for inquiry drives us to seek a more explanatory account of what it is in consciousness that responds to beauty and to the mystery of God. This chapter further probes these questions by drawing on the work of Bernard Lonergan.

I shall first offer some background on Lonergan's personal and theological formation, before discussing Lonergan's empirical approach to theological reflection as well as to spirituality and vocation, an approach that is grounded in the unique realities of each situation. For Lonergan, as for Balthasar, an answer to the question of what it is to be oneself requires the category of mystery. I will discuss our experience of mystery in the context of our orientation towards a "vertical finality" and the necessity for the transformative effects of conversion. I will reflect also on the comment often heard by spiritual directors. It is the phrase "I just know" applied to the sense of certainty that God has called an individual to make a

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<sup>1</sup> Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic: The Boston College Lectures on Mathematical Logic and Existentialism*, ed. Philip J. McShane, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 18 (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2001), 171, 235.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 234-246, especially 240.



particular decision or to do a particular action. I will draw on the tools Lonergan provides through his analysis of the functioning of human consciousness to examine such remarks.

Hence, this chapter comprises the following topics:

1. An Empirical Approach to Vocation and Mysticism
2. Conversion and Becoming Oneself
3. Embodiment and the Mystery of a "Known Unknown"
4. How Do We Know We Have Heard God?
5. Summary and Conclusion

### **1. An Empirical Approach to Vocation and Mysticism**

While for both Hans Urs von Balthasar and Bernard Lonergan attentiveness to experience is foundational for a life that is lived alert to God's call, their emphases derive from different sources. For Balthasar his profound personal experience of call contributed to a theological emphasis upon the importance of experience. For Lonergan his intellectual analysis of the dynamic structure of human knowing contributed to the value he placed upon attentive receptivity to experience.

Lonergan's personality and his Jesuit formation were very different from that of Hans Urs von Balthasar. In contrast to the strong affective element in Balthasar's conversion experience, Lonergan's early experiences of Jesuit life were much more cerebral and he initially had difficulty appreciating the more mystical dimensions of Ignatian spirituality. The fundamental notion in Ignatian spirituality of the consolation without previous cause was, at the early stage of Lonergan's professional life, incomprehensible to him.<sup>3</sup> Lonergan is also much more reticent about his personal prayer life than Balthasar. Nevertheless, conversations between Frederick Crowe and Gordon Rixon give us a little information about Lonergan's early Jesuit formation.<sup>4</sup> Rixon notes that Lonergan's experience of his Jesuit

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<sup>3</sup> Gordon A. Rixon, "Bernard Lonergan and Mysticism," *Theological Studies* 62 (2001): 481.

<sup>4</sup> Gordon A. Rixon, "Bernard Lonergan and Mysticism," *Theological Studies* 62 (2001): 480n483. Frederick Crowe was a Jesuit student who sat under Lonergan's teaching and retreat giving. He is now one of the foremost Lonergan researchers.

training was spiritually “arid” because it was determined by a “classicist model of spiritual perfection.”<sup>5</sup> Considering that the classicist model looks for universal and permanent norms, it would have been unable to respect Lonergan’s unique individuality and hence would have given little room for spiritual inspiration.<sup>6</sup> Lonergan criticised the way in which theology articulated merely abstract metaphysical concepts that had no relationship to ordinary living.<sup>7</sup> The Lonergan scholar, Robert Doran, reflects that from Lonergan’s point of view the classicist framework dominated the ecclesiastical hierarchy and “crippled” the creativity of Catholic theologians.<sup>8</sup>

Like Balthasar, Lonergan rejected the traditional notion of perfection as the outcome of a set of generally applicable principles to be adhered to in a Pelagian manner. Instead he espoused an empirical model that tries to identify which particular cluster of meanings and values determines a mode of living. With this point of view different times and different cultures create different meanings and values.<sup>9</sup> This is a concrete approach wherein there is no single, normative account of a matter. Basic to the method is not proof derived from the abstract concepts of classicism, but rather conversion, a concept that I will address later in this chapter.<sup>10</sup> Influenced as he was by Ignatius, Lonergan’s emphasis on an empirical approach to spiritual matters informed his view of how we should cooperate with grace. After writing his seminal work *Insight*, Lonergan presented two lectures on “Grace and the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius.”<sup>11</sup> In these lectures he focused on the goal of the Christian life, namely union with God and the transformation that such union accomplishes in the

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<sup>5</sup> Rixon, “Bernard Lonergan and Mysticism,” 480, 490. Rixon’s observations are the fruit of his access to archival material at the Lonergan Research Institute, Toronto, for which see Rixon, “Bernard Lonergan and Mysticism,” 480n483.

<sup>6</sup> For an excellent and succinct presentation of the classicist model, see Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite*, 3, 7.

<sup>7</sup> Rixon, “Bernard Lonergan and Mysticism,” 484-485.

<sup>8</sup> Robert M. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 4.

<sup>9</sup> See Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), xi.

<sup>10</sup> See Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 338.

<sup>11</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*; Rixon, “Bernard Lonergan and Mysticism,” 483-484.

human person. He emphasised God's gracious initiative in enabling the soul to move spontaneously towards God. For Lonergan Ignatius' *Exercises* are practical, since they teach a way to cooperate with grace.

In the context of lectures to fellow Jesuits in the hope of furthering their spiritual growth, Lonergan emphasised the "real apprehension of grace in concrete living."<sup>12</sup> Lonergan believes that the ultimate Christian aim is to participate in the life of Christ. When the Holy Spirit indwells us, there are interior consequences similar to those that Christ experienced. Our understanding can be illuminated and our will reoriented.<sup>13</sup> Lonergan writes of the freedom that grace brings to our lives:

Experience of grace . . . 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. It is experience of a twofold frustration of that capacity: the objective frustration of life in a world distorted by sin; the subjective frustration of one's incapacity to break with one's own evil ways. It is experience of a transformation one did not bring about but rather underwent, as divine providence let evil take its course and vertical finality be heightened, as it let one's circumstances shift, one's dispositions change, new encounters occur, and – so gently and quietly – one's heart be touched.<sup>14</sup>

Lonergan here speaks eloquently of the way in which grace transforms every dimension of our being, not only our intrapersonal being but also our interpersonal being. It introduces new people and situations into our lives and confronts us with the sin and limitations that prevent God's grace having its full transformative effect. The cycles of consolation and desolation are an ever-present dimension of such a life and necessitate the exercise of discernment. Recognising that mystical prayer is an aspect of this life, Lonergan cites the classic work by Augustin Poulain and the latter's considerations of Teresa of Avila's *Interior Castle*.<sup>15</sup> Hence, although Lonergan emphasises a "concrete ideal" in his focus upon a concrete vocational expression, his vision for Christian living also includes the heights of

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<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Rixon, "Bernard Lonergan and Mysticism," 485.

<sup>13</sup> Rixon, "Bernard Lonergan and Mysticism," 485.

<sup>14</sup> Bernard J. F. Lonergan, "Mission and the Spirit," in *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J.*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 32-33.

<sup>15</sup> See Augustin Poulain, *The Graces of Interior Prayer: A Treatise on Mystical Theology*, trans. Leonora L. Yorke Smith (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1928); Teresa of Avila, "The Interior Castle," 263-450.

mystical aspiration.<sup>16</sup> I will reflect now on Lonergan's vision of mysticism as a whole way of life.

Although at first he failed to understand the Ignatian concept of consolation without previous cause, Lonergan was nevertheless alert to the importance of spiritual growth. In a letter to a friend to whom he gave spiritual direction, Lonergan observed, "Spiritual progress consists in beginning from an initial blanket submission and gradually bringing it more and more fully into effect as God gives us more and more grace."<sup>17</sup> Hence Lonergan, like Balthasar, was aware of the importance of the call to a specific expression of God's will for the life of an individual.

Lonergan conceives the spiritual goal as one of the "realization of my concrete, whole, coherent, unified and harmonised ideal" in the circumstances of my vocation.<sup>18</sup> He envisaged an existential experience of unity and integration being harmoniously expressed in the context of service. While Lonergan recognised the importance of such traditional practices as reparation, self-denial and the rectification of one's life, he advised retreatants that the effort to align speech and thought with God was more important for meditation. To speak or think with God requires sensitivity to "the spontaneous movement of the soul towards God because of the workings of grace."<sup>19</sup> Such sensitivity requires a moment by moment alertness to God's movements experienced interiorly. Lonergan came to see that attending to God's call meant attending to consciousness in the moment by moment details of daily life.

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<sup>16</sup> Lonergan, quoted in Rixon, "Bernard Lonergan and Mysticism," 481-482. Rixon draws on the retreat notes made by a retreat participant, Michael Lapierre. Others at the retreat were Frederick Crowe and Patrick Malone, for which see Rixon, "Bernard Lonergan and Mysticism," 481n487. I shall refer to the "Lapierre Retreat Notes" whenever appropriate.

<sup>17</sup> Bernard J. F. Lonergan, Letter to Pat Coonan, May 2, 1953. I am grateful to Dr. Philip McShane for providing me with a copy of this typewritten letter.

<sup>18</sup> Lapierre Retreat Notes, Rixon, "Bernard Lonergan and Mysticism," 482. While Lonergan addressed his retreat to Jesuit students, we can see the same principle operating in any pattern of life.

<sup>19</sup> Rixon, "Bernard Lonergan and Mysticism," 484. Rixon here draws on archival material, specifically "Folder 18."

In a letter he wrote in support of Harvey Egan's application for an associate professorship with tenure at Boston College, Lonergan reflected on the things he had learnt from Egan.<sup>20</sup> As I noted previously, Egan, in his doctoral dissertation under Karl Rahner, had sought to heighten awareness of the relevance of both mysticism and the tradition of discernment of spirits within the Catholic world.<sup>21</sup> Following Rahner, Egan had identified the Ignatian concept of consolation without previous cause as crucial for discerning God's will in the details of daily living.<sup>22</sup> Egan's development of Rahner's thought enabled Lonergan to understand the meaning of the words "consolation without a previous cause."<sup>23</sup> Lonergan tells us:

I had been hearing those words since 1922 at the annual retreats made by Jesuits preparing for the priesthood. . . . But now, after fifty-three years, I began for the first time to grasp what they meant. What had intervened was what Rahner describes as the anthropological turn, the turn from metaphysical objects to conscious subjects.<sup>24</sup>

Through Egan Lonergan realised that the "Ignatian *examen conscientiae*" meant not an "examination of conscience but an examination of consciousness."<sup>25</sup> With this insight Lonergan came to appreciate that mysticism is "not just a series of exceptional events. It is a whole way of life."<sup>26</sup> Lonergan observed that the same mysticism of everyday life was implicit in Paul's observation, "all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God" (Rom

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<sup>20</sup> Bernard J. F. Lonergan, "Bernard Lonergan to Thomas O'Malley November 8, 1978," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 20 (2002): 82; Gordon A. Rixon, "Bernard Lonergan to Thomas O'Malley November 8, 1978," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 20 (2002): 77.

<sup>21</sup> Egan's project was entitled "An Anthropocentric-Christocentric Mystagogy: A Study of the Method and Basic Horizon of Thought and Experience in the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius of Loyola," for which see Lonergan, "Lonergan to O'Malley," 81. For the subsequent publication of the dissertation, see Egan, *The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Mystical Horizon*.

<sup>22</sup> For Rahner's presentation of the importance of the consolation without previous cause for discernment within the context of the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises*, see Rahner, Rahner, "The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge," 84-170.

<sup>23</sup> Lonergan, "Lonergan to O'Malley," 81.

<sup>24</sup> Lonergan, "Lonergan to O'Malley," 81.

<sup>25</sup> Lonergan, "Lonergan to O'Malley," 81.

<sup>26</sup> Lonergan, "Lonergan to O'Malley," 82. For a discussion of the relationship between mysticism and spirituality, see Bernard McGinn, "Mystical Consciousness: A Modest Proposal," *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 8 (2008): 44-63.

8:14) and in Newman's "Lead, Kindly Light, Lead Thou me on."<sup>27</sup> I suggest that it is also present in the guiding light that burned in the heart of St. John of the Cross.<sup>28</sup>

Like Balthasar, Lonergan follows Ignatius in valuing asceticism as an essential dimension of a life lived attentive to God's leading in the details of daily living. Ignatius required that exercitants be alert to their true selves by growing in awareness of interior disorder. Such asceticism is of a much more interior kind than the asceticism of the Western monastic tradition, exemplified by hair shirts, flagellation, fasting, vigils, almsgiving and pilgrimage.<sup>29</sup> Balthasar's approach was to point to the importance of identification with Christ's death for the development of Ignatian indifference. While totally supporting this primary Christian principle, Lonergan goes further by offering an explanatory account of the principle in terms of consciousness. He stresses the importance of interior awareness in the endeavour to satisfy Ignatius' requirement to dispense with inordinate attachments that prevent the attainment of our "true" selves.<sup>30</sup>

In contrast to Balthasar who does not elaborate upon the elements that constitute such interior awareness, Lonergan explains Ignatius' notion of asceticism as the kind that requires interior vigilance and alertness to movements of consciousness that stray from authentic functioning. Defining authenticity in terms of the dynamics of consciousness, Lonergan calls for this type of vigilance in his insistence on the importance of attentiveness to our consciousness.<sup>31</sup> An essential dimension of Lonergan's insight into the structure of consciousness is self-questioning, the value of which has been recognised in the spiritual

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<sup>27</sup> Lonergan, "Lonergan to O'Malley," 82.

<sup>28</sup> See St. John of the Cross, "The Ascent of Mt. Carmel," in *The Collected Works of St John of the Cross*, ed. Kieran Kavanagh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1979), 69.

<sup>29</sup> See Andrew Louth, "Asceticism," in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 132. The limits of this study do not permit an elaboration upon the traditional asceticism involved in drawing closer to God.

<sup>30</sup> Cf Egan, *The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Mystical Horizon*, 69; Fleming, ed., *Spiritual Exercises*, §63.

<sup>31</sup> For a reflection on the ascetic dimension in Lonergan's work, see Raymond Moloney, "Conversion and Spirituality: Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984)," *The Way* 43, no. 4 (2004): 128-129.

tradition as an important aspect of asceticism.<sup>32</sup> Such attentiveness supports the goal of self-transcendence that yields engagement with mystery, which I shall now consider.

Loneragan frames his approach to the question of mystery in terms of human consciousness. This approach is exemplified by a question that addresses the relationship between mission and the Spirit. Lonergan asks, "What in terms of human consciousness is the transition from the natural to the supernatural?"<sup>33</sup> In other words, how does union with the Father, in the Son, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, enter into human consciousness?<sup>34</sup> The consideration of this question leads to the further issue of how to explain, in terms of human consciousness, the event of being sent out in mission as Jesus was sent out in mission by the Father. Lonergan answers these questions in terms of "finality" and self-transcendence.

Loneragan reflects that "proportionate being," by which he means all that is created and all that can be known on the basis of human experience, exhibits an "incompleteness" because proportionate being is "becoming."<sup>35</sup> The human being and the universe are "in process, in tension, fluid."<sup>36</sup> It is to this process that Lonergan accords the term "finality." Vertical finality orients a thing to something higher than itself.<sup>37</sup> The consequence for the human being is an innate drive to remedy the experience of incompleteness in the search for

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<sup>32</sup> For a reference to Evagrius, as well as to a contemporary reflection by Iris Murdoch on the value of self-questioning, see McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth*, 195.

<sup>33</sup> Lonergan, "Mission and the Spirit," 23. See also Doran's discussion of this transition, in Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 108ff.

<sup>34</sup> Lonergan, "Mission and the Spirit," 31.

<sup>35</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 444-445. In contrast to "proportionate being," "being" is the all inclusive sweep of all that can be intelligently affirmed by a pure and detached and disinterested desire to know, for which see Lonergan, *Insight*, 348. For the observation that there is an identity between being and reality, see Bernard J. F. Lonergan, "Cognitive Structure," in *Collection: Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J.*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 211. Note that by a "pure" desire to know Lonergan means a desire that is detached and disinterested, unaffected by biased or prejudiced motives. In many ways it is similar to Ignatian indifference.

<sup>36</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 445.

<sup>37</sup> See also Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 47-49.

closure.<sup>38</sup> Awareness of this incompleteness will vary between individuals. Some will not experience it, distracted as they are with the world “out there.” Others will find the incompleteness to be pressing, creating an exigence that demands attention, and eliciting questions concerning who one is and what one is to do. Questions of this kind are addressed only through the dynamic of self-transcendence.

When we transcend ourselves, there occurs an “upthrust,” a dynamic movement from below through the heights of our full self-expression.<sup>39</sup> Lonergan refers variously to the thrust that drives this change as the “eros of the human spirit” or the “passionateness of being.”<sup>40</sup> Lonergan’s major achievement was to identify the self-transcending dynamics of intentional consciousness comprising the successive stages in the unfolding of this thrust.<sup>41</sup> The “basic fulfilment” of that thrust is being in love with God and, once we are in love with God, we are alert to the transcendent realm.<sup>42</sup> It is attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible cooperation with this drive that releases human beings from the painful experience of incompleteness. Such cooperation frees them for the fulfilling experiences of integration and simplicity. It resolves the striving that undergirds existential self-questions and brings rest.

Lonergan cites Aristotle’s definition of nature as an “immanent principle of movement and of rest,” a principle which, Lonergan argues, manifests in humanity through our asking and

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<sup>38</sup> The term “closure” derives from *Gestalt* principles of perception and has been adopted by *Gestalt* psychotherapy. It refers to the natural ability of the human mind to see a whole, even though only the parts are provided. A traditional example is an incomplete circle; the mind automatically “closes” the circle and recognises it as a circle. A modern example is that of texting, wherein even though only fragments of a word are given the word is easily recognised. I am using the term existentially to refer to the natural human tendency to seek a resolution to interior disquiet. For a discussion of the principles of closure operative in the contexts of perception, thought and psychopathology, see C. K. Ogden, ed., *A Source Book of Gestalt Psychology* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1938; reprint, 2001).

<sup>39</sup> See Bernard J. F. Lonergan, “Finality, Love and Marriage,” in *Collection: Papers by Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, *The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 18. For Lonergan’s concept of a “thing,” see especially Lonergan, *Insight*, 245-270.

<sup>40</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 13; Lonergan, “Mission and the Spirit,” 29.

<sup>41</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 13.

<sup>42</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 105.



answering questions.<sup>43</sup> For Lonergan, as for Balthasar, both of whom were influenced by Thomas Aquinas, it is wonder that drives those questions, the wonder consonant with the eros of the human spirit. Lonergan's account of human nature grounds Aristotle's principle of movement and rest in the dynamics of human consciousness, appropriate attention to which issues in self-knowledge.

The mystics repeatedly call for self-knowledge. For Catherine of Siena familiarity with the "cell of self-knowledge" is an essential criterion for the knowledge of God.<sup>44</sup> Teresa of Avila, describing the rooms in her "interior castle," insists that the room of self-knowledge is highly "necessary."<sup>45</sup> John of the Cross calls for strict vigilance of one's interior thoughts and desires.<sup>46</sup> The followers of Ignatius of Loyola are carefully instructed to observe spiritual "stirrings" and "movements."<sup>47</sup> Lonergan's analysis of the elements of self-knowledge complements the mystics' common sense approach and enables a greater degree of self-appropriation. Critical for that self-appropriation is the capacity to be present to oneself.

While wonder drives questions, wonder arises only in response to the spontaneous flow of consciousness. All the senses contribute to this flow. We exercise our five senses not only in response to things that we see, hear, smell, taste and touch. The senses also help us to imagine and to feel. Interoceptive sensations arise spontaneously from within the body, particularly within the viscera. We may subsequently reflect upon and evaluate those sensations as pleasant or unpleasant. In the first instance, however, they are utterly spontaneous. When we speak or move, our senses detect new interoceptive sensations, alerting the brain to the positioning of parts of the body, for example. For Lonergan

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<sup>43</sup> See Bernard J. F. Lonergan, "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness," in *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J.*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 172.

<sup>44</sup> St. Catherine of Siena, *Catherine of Siena: The Dialogue*, trans. Suzanne Noffke (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 25. See also Meredith Secomb, "The Role of the 'Cell of Self-Knowledge' in the Authority of Catherine of Siena," *Magistra: A Journal of Women's Spirituality in History* 9, no. 2 (2003): 41-54.

<sup>45</sup> See Teresa of Avila, "The Interior Castle," 288-296.

<sup>46</sup> John of the Cross, "The Ascent of Mt. Carmel," 43-292.

<sup>47</sup> John Veltri, *Orientations* (Guelph, Ontario: Loyola House, 1996), 161. Quoted in Gallagher, *The Examen Prayer*, 118.

attentiveness to such phenomena constitutes the exercise of empirical consciousness, which yields two types of data. First, there is data derived from attending to the senses; secondly, there is data derived from attending to our consciousness. The data of sense comes from attending to objects, whether exterior or interior to ourselves. So, for example, we attend to an object external to ourselves when we notice leaves gleaming in the sunshine. In contrast, we become an object to ourselves when we attend to internal sensations as our bodies relax in the warmth of the sun.

There is another way in which we can attend to our interiority. In this other way we are present to ourselves as a subject rather than as an object. We cannot introspect to attend to this presence to ourselves. We can only be aware of this internal "data of consciousness" in the exercise of our intentionality. We can heighten our awareness of presence to self through heightening the level of our intentional activity. So, for example, if we are dreaming we are present to ourselves only as dreamers are present to themselves when they are frightened in a dream. Waking and reflecting on the dream results in a new experience of presence to ourselves. If we then enquire, in Freudian or Jungian fashion, into the meaning of the dream, there is a further level of presence to ourselves. Another dimension of presence to ourselves can occur if we sit in faith-filled prayer with the sensations that the dream generated. With each different intentional activity there is a different experience of presence to self because the data of consciousness changes.

To Lonergan consciousness is the awareness immanent in acts of sensing and feeling, inquiring and understanding, deliberating, deciding and acting.<sup>48</sup> The essential unity of a person manifests in this primordially immediate experience of consciousness as presence to self.<sup>49</sup> It is the experience of one's self: "The *oneself* is the irreducibly individual element whence spring the choices of the decisive person and the drifting or forgetting of the

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<sup>48</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 320, 322. Bernard J. F. Lonergan, "First Lecture: Religious Experience," in *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J.*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 117.

<sup>49</sup> Robert M. Doran, *Subject and Psyche: Ricoeur, Jung and the Search for Foundations* (Washington: University Press of America, 1979), 114; Bernard J. F. Lonergan, "Christ as Subject: A Reply," in *Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan S.J.*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 165.

indecisive person. What springs from that source is free; for it one is responsible.”<sup>50</sup> This tacit experience of self that, while remaining in the background, always accompanies our explicit experiencing, knowing and acting is experienced as “prior, opaque and luminous.”<sup>51</sup> It is that which is most private and intimate within us.<sup>52</sup> It is the core of our being. It is Balthasar’s “inmost ‘I.’”

The task for one seeking God’s will in vocational expression is to learn to attend to the experience of presence to self as it manifests in prayerful reflection on possible choices for action. As noted previously, the consolation without previous cause provides a reference point for discernment. Once one has learnt to attend to one’s experience of self-presence in the various contexts of everyday living, one can learn to recognise whether the experience is congruent or discordant with the primary reference point of the experience of a consolation without previous cause. Foundational for this capacity is conversion and the desire to become fully who one is called to be and to do what one is called to do.

## 2. Conversion and Becoming Oneself

Lonergan insists that human beings are truly themselves when they exercise self-transcendence and that they are alienated from themselves when they refuse self-transcendence. The way to self-transcendence is conversion.<sup>53</sup> Lonergan’s reflections can be applied to Balthasar’s divided and alienated individual, painfully aware of a dichotomy between the experience of his or her interiority and the experience accompanying exterior performance. Lonergan claims that such individuals have engaged in an inappropriate introversion, which creates a conflict between the “*persona* that appears before others and the more intimate ego.”<sup>54</sup> Such introversion can result in a “scotosis,” a “blind spot” that

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<sup>50</sup> Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 240. Emphasis original.

<sup>51</sup> Lonergan, “*Existenz and Aggiornamento*,” 229.

<sup>52</sup> Lonergan, “*Existenz and Aggiornamento*,” 222.

<sup>53</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 357.

<sup>54</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 191. Emphasis original.

prevents insight and development and which constitutes one dimension of the personal limitations that Ignatius' first "week" addresses.<sup>55</sup> From Lonergan's point of view these individuals are alienated from themselves because they are not authentically pursuing the exigence for self-transcendence.

Conversion is an essential constitutive dimension of Bernard Lonergan's notion of the self as a self-transcending, intentional "becoming," for, as Lonergan observes, the "being of the subject is becoming."<sup>56</sup> In the process of becoming oneself one leaves behind the familiar for experiences and knowledge that may challenge all that has gone before. The core experience of who one is does not remain static. It is precarious and consequently is subject to both decline and development.<sup>57</sup> Conversion is a major contributor to that development. Fred Lawrence makes the following observation concerning conversion:

Every subject as other is involved concretely in personal, cultural, and social sin. So Lonergan's central project of self-appropriation demands several different kinds of reversals or conversions even to get off the ground. Conversion is a radical revolution in our personal, social, and historical horizon, involving a total reorientation or reorganization of our stream of consciousness – and, overwhelmingly, of our imaginations memories, and feelings.<sup>58</sup>

In other words, conversion restructures our experience of ourselves as well as the narrative we adopt to understand ourselves.<sup>59</sup> It is able to do so through the release of symbols that penetrate our psychic depths, thereby affecting all of our conscious and intentional operations.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> For Lonergan's discussion of scotosis in the context of the larger issue of dramatic bias, see Lonergan, *Insight*, 191-206.

<sup>56</sup> Lonergan, "Existenz and Aggiornamento," 223. For Lonergan "oneself" refers to that which is most private and intimate within us, for which see Lonergan, "Existenz and Aggiornamento," 222.

<sup>57</sup> Lonergan, "Existenz and Aggiornamento," 229-230. Note that Lonergan repeatedly insists on the precarious nature of human authenticity. See for example Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 252.

<sup>58</sup> Frederick Lawrence, "Lonergan's Postmodern Subject: Neither Neoscholastic Substance nor Cartesian Ego," in *In Deference to the Other: Lonergan and Contemporary Continental Thought*, ed. Jim Kanaris and Mark J. Doorley (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004), 115-116.

<sup>59</sup> For a reflection on the foundational narrative dimension of being human, see Mary Frohlich, *The Intersubjectivity of the Mystic: A Study of Teresa of Avila's Interior Castle* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1993), 58-60.

<sup>60</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 131.

Conversion is the consequence of an exercise of freedom, which moves us out of an established horizon that determines the present scope of our knowledge and interests.<sup>61</sup> It moves us into a new and richer depth of the familiar or into a totally new horizon that involves a repudiation of the old.<sup>62</sup> Because conversion changes the horizons that determine our present standpoint, it exposes us to new and often challenging possibilities that may generate anxiety and, sometimes, even dread.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, insofar as Balthasar's call to a thorough identification with Christ requires death to one's current self-concepts, existential dread can readily be a consequence. Such extremes of emotion may prevent the necessary transformation of horizon that is achievable through conversion. It is necessary, therefore, to learn how to accept in faith, rather than to reject in fear, the emotions and sensations that accompany anxiety and dread. In that acceptance subjects will discover a transformation of their experience that can open the way to conversion.<sup>64</sup>

There are different types of conversions. Lonergan identifies intellectual, moral and religious conversions as essential for authenticity.<sup>65</sup> Lonergan's focus on intellectual conversion derived from his development of a cognitional theory based on the empirical data of our own consciousness. An intellectual conversion involves a rejection of the myth that knowing is taking a look at what appears to be "really out there" and instead involves the acceptance that truth is reached by correctly understanding our experience.<sup>66</sup> Lonergan reflects on the

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<sup>61</sup> For Lonergan's discussion of the different types of horizon, namely complementary, genetic and dialectical, see Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 236-237. For the distinction between a horizontal and vertical exercise of freedom, Lonergan draws on the work of Joseph de Finance, for which see Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 237.

<sup>62</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 236-237.

<sup>63</sup> For Lonergan's discussion of our exposure to dread, see Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 288.

<sup>64</sup> Psychological work that encourages subjects to be attentive to their experiences and to accept, rather than to reject, them will yield a transformation of those experiences. See, for example, Cayoun, *Mindfulness-integrated Cognitive Behaviour Therapy*.

<sup>65</sup> For a presentation of intellectual and moral conversions, see Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 238-240. For reflections on religious conversion by the Lonergan scholar, Robert Doran, see Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 107-109.

<sup>66</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 238-241. It is a conversion to the position not of a naïve realist or an idealist, but of a critical realist, for which see Lonergan, *Insight*, xxviii.

way in which the Holy Spirit effects a transition to intellectual conversion on the basis of already established moral and religious conversions.<sup>67</sup> Moral conversion moves the criteria for decision from satisfaction to value. It gives rise to the “existential moment” wherein we discover that our choices affect who we are to become.<sup>68</sup> It enables a person to establish a new sense of self with an experience of interior freedom derived from choosing values as the basis for action, rather than egocentric self-gratification.<sup>69</sup> Those values are apprehended through feelings. Hence, the development of appropriate affectivity is an important component of authentic development.<sup>70</sup> Ultimate freedom derives from the total surrender of self experienced through religious conversion. This conversion issues in the loving awareness of being held and loved by God and establishes a new foundation for ethical action.<sup>71</sup> As Balthasar has often observed, this new foundation is love. I move now to a more extended consideration of Lonergan’s understanding of religious conversion.

Whereas in earlier theological formulations a life lived in love with God would have been referred to as a life filled with sanctifying grace, Lonergan prefers to explain this state in terms of consciousness.<sup>72</sup> He speaks of being in love with God. In such circumstances the “gift of God’s love occupies the ground and root of the fourth and highest level of [our] intentional consciousness” and “takes over the peak of the soul, the *apex animae*.”<sup>73</sup> In this state there is a complete fulfilment of the consciousness that makes judgements of value

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<sup>67</sup> Lonergan, “Mission and the Spirit,” 32.

<sup>68</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 240.

<sup>69</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 242.

<sup>70</sup> For reflections on the concept of affective conversion by Lonergan scholars, see John D. Dadosky, “Healing the Psychological Subject: Towards a Fourfold Notion of Conversion?,” *Theoforum* 35, no. 1 (2004): 73-91; Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 9, 42ff., 52, 59, 85-90; Bernard J. Tyrrell, “Affectional Conversion: A Distinct Conversion or Potential Differentiation in the Spheres of Sensitive Psychic and/or Affective Conversion?,” *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 14 (1996): 1-35.

<sup>71</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 242.

<sup>72</sup> For a discussion of scholastic modes of understanding grace from the point of view of an abstract conceptualism in contrast to a Thomist approach that offers a personal, anthropocentric thought-form, see S. J. Duffy, *The Dynamics of Grace: Perspectives in Theological Anthropology* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1993).

<sup>73</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 107.

and acts responsibly on the basis of those judgements. Religious conversion for Lonergan is both “prior to and principle of subsequent acts” and is an “under-tow of existential consciousness.”<sup>74</sup> There are frequent references to such principles throughout Lonergan’s writing. For example, he speaks of the “passionateness of being” that “underpins and accompanies and reaches beyond the subject as experientially, intelligently, rationally, morally conscious.”<sup>75</sup> Moreover he elaborates upon this “underpinning” in an explanatory fashion: “Its underpinning is the quasi-operator that presides over the transition from the neural to the psychic. It ushers into consciousness not only the demands of unconscious vitality but also the exigences of vertical finality.”<sup>76</sup> It is the value of awareness of the transition from the neural to the psychic that I am trying to highlight in my emphasis upon awareness of empirical consciousness.<sup>77</sup> Hence, Lonergan’s acknowledgement of the neural component is a helpful contribution to my concerns.

Lonergan considers both the foundational neural operations as well as the heights of existential engagement in loving, mystical intimacy with God. So while on the one hand, religious conversion is neurally grounded, on the other it occurs when one is “grasped by ultimate concern.”<sup>78</sup>

It is total and permanent self-surrender without conditions, qualifications, reservations. But it is such a surrender, not as an act, but as a dynamic state that is prior to and principle of subsequent acts. It is revealed in retrospect as an under-tow of existential consciousness, as a fated acceptance of a vocation to holiness, as perhaps an increasing simplicity and passivity in prayer.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 240.

<sup>75</sup> Lonergan, "Mission and the Spirit," 29.

<sup>76</sup> Lonergan, "Mission and the Spirit," 29.

<sup>77</sup> For further reflections on the psychic nature of the “underpinning” or “passionateness of being,” see Lonergan, "Mission and the Spirit," 29-30; Lonergan, "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness," 174-175. For the observation that this dynamic can be called “psychic,” see Robert M. Doran, "The Starting Point of Systematic Theology," *Theological Studies* 67, no. 4 (2006): 766n726. See also Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 27.

<sup>78</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 240.

<sup>79</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 240-241.

Lonergan here highlights existential dimensions of religious conversion, in particular the requirement of surrender and the “vocation to holiness.” The outcome of a self-transcending intentionality that upholds an ultimate value of loving God and neighbour is holiness. Such holiness is the culmination of loving God and responding to the “summons to rise out of our egoism and to become a force for love in the world.”<sup>80</sup> This God-given directive becomes the principle of a person’s life.

Such surrender is not a solitary act but a dimension that occurs as a “dynamic state that is prior to and principle of subsequent acts.” This state has an impact on the nature of one’s prayer, which changes from a more self-directed, active prayer to a simpler, receptive type of prayer as one surrenders to the infusion of God’s love. Lonergan observes that religious conversion “grounds” moral and intellectual conversion and provides “the real criterion by which all else is to be judged.”<sup>81</sup> Moreover, the experience of God’s encompassing, all-embracing love is so profound that “one has only to experience it in oneself or witness it in others to find in it its own justification.”<sup>82</sup> Harkening back to the Aristotelian notion of nature as a principle of movement and rest, Lonergan grounds that principle in God’s love for humanity.<sup>83</sup> Such love is, however, not merely a principle of movement and of rest but rather a “tidal movement” that both undergirds and transcends consciousness. While it unfolds through each level of intentional consciousness, it achieves rest beyond these.<sup>84</sup> This rest constitutes being in love with God. The gift of God’s love is a new principle within the

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<sup>80</sup> Moloney, “Conversion and Spirituality,” 128.

<sup>81</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 283.

<sup>82</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 283-284.

<sup>83</sup> Lonergan, “Natural Right and Historical Mindedness,” 172.

<sup>84</sup> See Lonergan, “Natural Right and Historical Mindedness,” 175; Bernard J. F. Lonergan, “Philosophy and the Religious Phenomenon,” in *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980*, ed. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 400. The suggestion that this principle both undergirds and transcends consciousness has contributed to Robert Doran’s proposal that there are six levels of consciousness, although only the middle four exercise intentionality, for which see Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 90. For a contrary view that Lonergan uses the word “level” very loosely, see Michael Vertin, “Lonergan on Consciousness: Is There a Fifth Level?,” *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 12, no. 1 (1994): 36.



human psyche, touching us most intimately while also liberating us to serve that which is of most value.<sup>85</sup> It ushers us into the experience of mystery.

Lonergan insists that this state does not yield knowledge because it is an experience of mystery. Our intellect enjoys a “clouded” awareness of mystery that generates questions certainly, but questions that do not receive answers such as those received in other fields of activity. It is not answers to questions that are of value here. It is, rather, our feelings, for it is our feelings that give an apprehension of the value of this mysterious “cloud.”<sup>86</sup> Lonergan cites Pascal in his observation that “the heart has reasons that reason does not know.”<sup>87</sup> The heart’s “knowledge” derives from the feelings associated with religious experience, accompanied by a recognition of value on the part of one in love with God.<sup>88</sup> Experience is merely the infrastructure for the knowledge derived from love, referred to by some influenced by Lonergan as “affective knowledge.”<sup>89</sup> Attentiveness to the felt-sense of this experience provides the measure for all future discernment in one’s search for a life aligned with God’s will.

Religious conversion transforms our “memories, imaginings and feelings,” which enables a new existence in Jesus Christ.<sup>90</sup> It establishes a new horizon of faith, which in generating new expectations enables the perception of new phenomena.<sup>91</sup> Hence, religious conversion is foundational for receptivity to the unique vocation to which God calls. To the extent that the

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<sup>85</sup> Lonergan, “Natural Right and Historical Mindedness,” 175.

<sup>86</sup> Note that Lonergan is fond of citing the *Cloud of Unknowing*.

<sup>87</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 115.

<sup>88</sup> For the observation that Lonergan is reluctant to speak of the experience of God, see Moloney, “Conversion and Spirituality,” 126. See also Raymond Moloney, “The Person as Subject of Spirituality in the Writings of Bernard Lonergan,” *Milltown Studies* 45, no. Summer (2000): 66-80.

<sup>89</sup> See, for example, Charles E. Bouchard, “Recovering the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in Moral Theology,” *Theological Studies* 63, no. 3 (2002): 539-558; Moloney, “Conversion and Spirituality,” 126-127; Thomas Ryan, “Revisiting Affective Knowledge and Connaturality in Aquinas,” *Theological Studies* 66, no. 1 (2005): 49-68.

<sup>90</sup> Lawrence, “Lonergan’s Postmodern Subject,” 116.

<sup>91</sup> James K. A. Smith, “Faith and the Conditions of Possibility of Experience,” in *The Experience of God: A Postmodern Response*, ed. Kevin Hart and Barbara Wall (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 89.

Holy Spirit transforms our feelings and we seek to be attentive to the movements of the Holy Spirit within us, a further conversion will assist that process. This is the psychic conversion to which Robert Doran calls us. I will present Doran's proposal in the following chapter.

For now the focus is on the phenomenological consequence of a religious conversion that opens the subject to the mystery of engagement with God. Lonergan gives us some useful categories for the consideration of a phenomenon that is ultimately mystery. These categories will address our question of how human consciousness can be receptive to mystery at the core of a person's being. In other words, they will serve us in our endeavour to understand what it is that subjects must attend to in their consciousness, if they are to cooperate with the mystery of God's call to a particular vocation and mission.

### **3. Embodiment and the Mystery of a "Known Unknown"**

The existential questions of who I am and what my call is derive from an experience of incompleteness. We have a sense that there is something "more," that there is something that will satisfy this often-times unidentifiable yearning within. There is an unknown something for which we long. Yet, while we experience a felt-sense of something lacking, we are unable to identify what that experienced "something" is. The exigence for insight into experience drives us to question. However, since the questions enquire into an unknown which we surmise may be available for knowing, there occurs the "paradoxical category of the 'known unknown.'"<sup>92</sup>

In the moment of existential questioning, Lonergan explains that the "organic, psychic and intellectual levels" of human functioning respond to this "unknown," yielding intimations of "unplumbed depths" carried in our feelings and emotions and producing an "undefined surplus of significance and momentousness."<sup>93</sup> These dimensions of our being yield, I

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<sup>92</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 115. For the distinctions between the "known," the "known unknown" and the "unknown unknown," see Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 198, 283.

<sup>93</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 532.

suggest, the “light” that guides the mystic to the longed-for rest.<sup>94</sup> The mystic can only poetically depict the phenomenon; Lonergan can explain it. He does so by articulating the process wherein body, imagination and intellect all respond to mystery.

In the context of differentiating between mystery and myth Lonergan explores the notion of mystery to which the human person is naturally oriented.<sup>95</sup> We have an unrestricted desire to know that is not satisfied by the insight that some questions cannot be answered.

Lonergan reflects on the dynamic of that desire:

[T]his unrestricted openness of our intelligence and reasonableness not only is the concrete operator of our intellectual development but also is accompanied by a corresponding operator that deeply and powerfully holds our sensitive integrations open to transforming change.<sup>96</sup>

Human beings naturally enquire into mystery. Lonergan here points to the interface of our “sensitive” functioning with that which achieves transformation in us. Human being is foundationally open to mystery at an embodied level. Similarly he observes that the “dynamism of decisions can be embodied in images that release feeling and emotion and flow spontaneously into deeds no less than words.”<sup>97</sup> Again, Lonergan refers to embodiment although without elaborating on the nature of that embodiment.

Lonergan’s concern is, however, more with images, feelings, emotions, deeds and words than with the embodied, sensate dimension of empirical consciousness. He refers to the “necessity of dynamic images that partly are symbols and partly are signs,” and adds that such images have their “ground in the very structure of man’s being, in which intellectual activity is a higher integration of the sensitive flow and the sensitive flow is a higher integration of organic performance.”<sup>98</sup> Lonergan recognises, then, that the “sensitive flow” is

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<sup>94</sup> For the reference to “no other light or guide/ Than the one that burned in my heart,” (*Sin otra luz y guía/Sino la que en el corazón ardía*), see John of the Cross, *The Collected Works of St John of the Cross*, 711.

<sup>95</sup> While Lonergan in *Insight* refers to myth from a pejorative point of view, he later observed that his use of the word “myth” was “out of line with current usage,” for which see Lonergan, “*Insight Revisited*,” 275.

<sup>96</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 546.

<sup>97</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 547.

<sup>98</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 547.

the higher integration of essentially unconscious, organic operations. Elsewhere Lonergan refers to a “symbolic operator that correlates neural potentialities and needs with higher goals through its control over the emergence of images and affects.”<sup>99</sup> When we are oriented to a mysterious “known unknown,” this symbolic operator engages sensible experience with higher levels of functioning. It generates images for intelligent consideration. It also generates feelings and emotions for consideration at the second level of intentional consciousness.

The “known unknown” is thereby mediated through sensory and imaginal dimensions of the human psyche for further consideration.<sup>100</sup> Critical to this process is the sensory dimension of human consciousness:

Because human understanding and judgment, decision and belief, are the higher integration of sensitive contents and activities, the origin, the expression and the application of intelligent and rational contents and directives lie *in the sensitive field*.<sup>101</sup>

Lonergan recognises that at the base of our experience of the known unknown is a sense dimension. Hence, the integration of empirical consciousness with an intelligent consciousness that is aware of sensible impressions constitutes a “dialectical unity in tension.”<sup>102</sup> Our human sense dimensions and our spirituality thereby coexist in tension.

Recapitulating, the experience of a “known unknown” creates data of consciousness for attentive and intelligent reflection. Every dimension of our being responds, including the first, sensory level of empirical consciousness. Reflection generates an awareness of depth, meaning and value. Ultimately exposure to these depths is an exposure to an experience of mystery. For the Christian faith is the appropriate response, a dimension important to both Balthasar and Lonergan. Later I will probe further the phenomenon of faith. For now I turn to

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<sup>99</sup> Lonergan, “Philosophy and the Religious Phenomenon,” 400.

<sup>100</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 548.

<sup>101</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 548. The emphasis is mine.

<sup>102</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 548.

an aspect of attentiveness to the data of consciousness that accompanies the experience of faith and to which Lonergan gives little attention.

Lonergan's emphasis is not upon sense data, but upon the higher integration that images and symbols yield. I suggest that there is value in recognising more fully that there are sense data available for our attention when our desire orients us to a known unknown. This is so because both the spontaneous empirical level and the consciousness that accompanies intelligent and reasonable questioning generate interoceptive data to which attentiveness is beneficial and constructive for spiritual growth. Mindful acceptance of these dimensions of the data of consciousness will achieve a greater plasticity of neural functioning and support the possibilities for spiritual transformation.<sup>103</sup> A consideration of artistic responsiveness will give further insight into this dimension of human functioning, and to this we now turn.

The reflections of Tad Dunne on what he does when he paints are helpful here.<sup>104</sup> Dunne draws on Lonergan's notion of differently patterned experiences in order to reflect on what he refers to as "aesthetic seeing." Such seeing spontaneously recognises and responds to beauty. It is patterned by the automatic selection and exclusion of various parts of the visual field. Dunne comments, "It is part of human wonder to select, exclude, organise and relate elements within the eye's total visual field, prior to any thought of ours."<sup>105</sup> As Dunne observes, the mind seeks order. In Balthasarian terms the mind seeks a *Gestalt*. The mind spontaneously and unselfconsciously envisages creative possibilities, automatically seeking order out of disorder. Frequently such possibilities are not readily articulated. Dunne emphasises, however, that "they are *felt* immediately."<sup>106</sup> The immediate felt-sense is

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<sup>103</sup> I suggest that it is such spiritual transformation, enabled by change at a neuropsychological level, that undergirds Balthasar's insistence that our senses can be transformed into the sensibilities of Jesus and Mary, for which see Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 378.

<sup>104</sup> Tad Dunne, "What Do I Do When I Paint?," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 16, no. 2 (1998): 103-132.

<sup>105</sup> Dunne, "What Do I Do When I Paint?," 106. Dunne exemplifies his point with the instance of amateur photographers who demonstrate such spontaneous exclusion when they think they have created a perfect photograph only to discover later that the final product shows a tree trunk growing out of their subject's head.

<sup>106</sup> Dunne, "What Do I Do When I Paint?," 106. Emphasis original.

associated with creatively envisaged possibilities, for artists naturally tend to be alert to “images with promise.”<sup>107</sup>

In commenting on the fact that possibilities are “felt,” Dunne refers to the experience of an embodied felt-sense that accompanies the creative urge. It is this embodied felt-sense that generates the spontaneous anticipation of “images with promise.” He refers to a “selective openness, a preliterate censor that channels the flow of our experience” towards that which we consider to be a creative possibility. For him, as an artist, that creative possibility will take a visual form. However, we can also consider the notion of “selective openness” in the context of an experience of mystery or of God’s grace. What is happening in this context? Dunne, like Lonergan, gives little attention to the felt-sense of the potential for creativity. He moves on instead to focus on the image and the symbol. Further, Dunne, appropriately for an artist, emphasises the kataphatic, image-making possibilities of the embodied felt-sense. I suggest that in the context of religious experience it is constructive to note two significant differences.

First, I consider that attending to the sensate dimension of our consciousness in the context of faith-filled intentionality towards God can itself be worthwhile. As Christians, we too readily move into imaginative and conceptual modes of relating to God. We can fail to recognise that we too experience an embodied felt-sense when grace presents us with “images of promise.” Secondly, I suggest that an apophatic approach to mystery on the basis of such awareness will be less likely to lead to premature closure and more likely to lead to openness and receptivity to the fullness of God’s creative working within the individual. While we say we were “touched” by something said in a homily, for example, rarely do we actually pay attention to the sensory component of that touch. We prefer instead to think about it or to allow images to arise from it. As a consequence, we often bring premature closure to the fullness of that which is offered to us. The sensory components of our encounters with mystery lack meaning for us. We fail to value embodied sensation and to exercise the faith that God can transform our physical senses into spiritual senses.

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<sup>107</sup> Dunne, “What Do I Do When I Paint?,” 106.

A regular habit of contemplative prayer is foundational for the development of an awareness of the felt-sense of the possibilities that grace presents us with. For Lonergan, as for Balthasar, prayer is an essential dimension of an authentic Christian life. Prayer orients us positively to God and to transcendence, enabling us to be “content with the enumerations of what God is not.”<sup>108</sup> Lonergan’s reflections on prayer support such an apophatic approach for which openness to grace is essential. While Balthasar speaks of the importance of receptivity, Lonergan speaks of “openness.”

We must be open to the grace that draws us with increasing consciousness into Christ, developing in us that which the Holy Spirit accomplished in Jesus Christ, namely a “habitual and actual illumination of our understanding and of the orientation of our wills.”<sup>109</sup> How does this happen? Rahner has spoken of the “pure openness to God” that must be left intact if we are to discern a particular object of choice as being within God’s will for us.<sup>110</sup> Similarly Lonergan refers to the way in which grace achieves within us an openness to religious experience.<sup>111</sup> Foundationally, openness is the “pure, detached, disinterested, unrestricted desire to know.”<sup>112</sup> It is the cause of wonder, for its objective is being, *omnia*, which is both “completely universal and completely concrete.”<sup>113</sup> While we are naturally capable of greater openness by enlarging our horizon, there is an “ultimate enlargement” which is beyond our own resources and where God as unknown is experienced as mystery.<sup>114</sup> We require a receptive attitude to appropriate this new development. This will occur only

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<sup>108</sup> See Bernard J. F. Lonergan, “Unity and Plurality: The Coherence of Christian Truth,” in *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 244. For directing me to this reference, I am grateful to Moloney, “Conversion and Spirituality,” 133n130. Moloney also enumerates Lonergan’s references to the simplifying effects of prayer, for which see Moloney, “Conversion and Spirituality,” 133n131.

<sup>109</sup> Lapierre Retreat notes quoted in Rixon, “Bernard Lonergan and Mysticism,” 185.

<sup>110</sup> Rahner, “The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge,” 158.

<sup>111</sup> Bernard J. F. Lonergan, “Openness and Religious Experience,” in *Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J.*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 185-187.

<sup>112</sup> Lonergan, “Openness and Religious Experience,” 186. See also Lonergan, *Insight*.

<sup>113</sup> Lonergan, “Openness and Religious Experience,” 186. For the importance of wonder in Balthasar see, for example, Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 2*, 286. For Balthasar’s observation that “Jesus Christ is the *concrete* form within which the *universal* fullness of the love of God is . . . bound up,” see Kehl, “Portrait,” 9.

<sup>114</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 107; Lonergan, “Openness and Religious Experience,” 186.

through two means: first, that of recognising the biases within us that prevent openness and, secondly, by prayer. So we turn now to consider Lonergan's reflections on bias before presenting those on prayer.

Foundational for the development of the insights that support continued development at both an individual and societal level is an open mind.<sup>115</sup> The implementation of insights is necessary for progress but such insights do not occur when bias prevents the awareness or adoption of such insights. Bias is particularly operative within the context of the dramatic pattern of experience that constitutes our ordinary living. Lonergan rightly identifies a foundational neurological dimension that manifests great plasticity in its capacity to support human development and the development of various skills.<sup>116</sup>

An aspiring pianist may have an intention to develop the skill of musical expertise, for example. This will place demands on "neural patterns and processes" for, say, the requisite finger memory to develop and an appropriate strategy for managing performance anxiety. The neural processes require "psychic representation and conscious integration."<sup>117</sup> In other words, the neurological activity seeks some form of higher psychic expression and integration. As Lonergan acknowledges, appropriate expressions of the neural demands can be repressed, a function that he dubs "Freud's censor."<sup>118</sup> The subject then suffers from the consequences of bias and scotosis.<sup>119</sup> So, for example, our pianist may perform excellently before an audience and experience elation subsequently. If she then overexerts herself, unreflectively drawing from the energy that the elation generates, she may subsequently feel depressed. She has failed to attribute appropriate meaning to the experience and hence failed to achieve the integration that would bring peace and rest. The neuropsychological

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<sup>115</sup> Bernard J. F. Lonergan, "Healing and Creating in History," in *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 105.

<sup>116</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 189.

<sup>117</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 190.

<sup>118</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 190.

<sup>119</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 191.



demand for equilibrium has made its presence felt by engendering depression to balance the preceding overactivity.<sup>120</sup>

Loneragan identifies four kinds of bias.<sup>121</sup> Neurotic habits, or what Lonergan also refers to as a “dramatic” bias, can cause an avoidance of those insights which are unconsciously understood as requiring feared change. Individual egotistical habits prevent insights into those situations that do not serve self-interest. Group egoism results in merely self-sustaining habits that do not serve the wider community. Common sense, the prerogative of the ordinary person in everyday life, can in its biased manifestations discount a valid theoretical contribution to a problem and stridently adhere to out-of-date measures for managing a situation. These forms of bias prevent growth, not only on the horizontal level of engagement with other human beings, but also on the vertical level of engagement with God. While therapeutic help or timely advice from a brave friend are frequently required to correct these deviations from healthy development, a regular habit of prayer with an assured intention to openness can be a means for self-discovery and transformation.

Openness invites a healing development from above downwards that occurs in the process of loving. It complements the creative movement from below. Lonergan identifies various expressions of love. There is the love of family, of tribe or clan, of city, country and humanity. There is also the love of God which orients us in the universe. Love enables transformation, breaking determinisms whether social or psychological.<sup>122</sup> Both movements are necessary, the creative movement from below and the healing movement from above. The creative process without the healing process is subject to bias; the healing process without the creative process is “a soul without a body.”<sup>123</sup> Lonergan exemplifies the

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<sup>120</sup> For a clear presentation of the brain as a complex self-regulating system, see Gerald Schueler, “The Human Brain and Psyche as Complex Systems,” (1997), <http://www.schuelers.com/chaos/chaos8.htm> (accessed January 30, 2010).

<sup>121</sup> For Lonergan’s various references to bias, see Lonergan, *Insight*, 191-206, 218-242, 627-633, 688-693; Lonergan, “Healing and Creating,” 105. See also his implicit reference to bias in his discussion of the parable of the sower, for which see Lonergan, “Religious Experience,” 119.

<sup>122</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 105; Lonergan, “Healing and Creating,” 106-107.

<sup>123</sup> Lonergan, “Healing and Creating,” 107.

necessity for both these movements by pointing to Christianity's engagement with the Roman Empire. While Christianity could heal much that was unsound, inasmuch as no "complementary creative vector" of authentic self-transcendence was operating, the Church moved into a dark period.<sup>124</sup>

I suggest that analogously the holistic transformation of the human person requires openness to both vectors. To the degree that devout persons of faith seek to pursue God's will for their lives, they must not only engage with God through prayer. They must also strive to be open to the God-given dynamics of their own self-transcending intentional consciousness. A focus on the former alone will cause a "super-spirituality" that lacks grounded embodiment. A focus on the latter alone will constrain the capacity for self-transcendence and will fail to realise the full potential of the person made in the image of God. I turn now to consider a major contributor to the healing process, namely the openness to God that occurs in contemplative prayer.

To each of the four levels of self-transcending intentional consciousness Lonergan accords a transcendental precept: be attentive, intelligent, rational, and responsible. He proposes a possible fifth precept for those whose lives are lived under the influence of grace: be in love.<sup>125</sup> Lonergan also suggests what we might consider to be a sixth precept. He observes, "The precept is: 'Pray without ceasing.'"<sup>126</sup> This precept is indispensable for hearing God's call. Lonergan seeks to explain how prayer enables us to be alert to God. He observes that in our immediacy to ourselves there are "supernatural realities" infused by grace.<sup>127</sup> These realities can remain immediate, in which case we are part of the body of Christ "but in a vegetative sort of way."<sup>128</sup> Alternatively, we can make a choice to live the life of grace

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<sup>124</sup> Lonergan, "Healing and Creating," 107-108.

<sup>125</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 20, 231, 105-107.

<sup>126</sup> 1 Thess 5:15. See Bernard J. F. Lonergan, "Mediation of Christ in Prayer," in *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-1964*, ed. Robert C. Croken, Frederick E. Crowe, and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 180.

<sup>127</sup> Lonergan, "Mediation of Christ in Prayer," 178.

<sup>128</sup> Lonergan, "Mediation of Christ in Prayer," 179.

consciously in such a way that we are readily “distracted from worldliness” through our love for the Lord of our lives.<sup>129</sup> It is prayer that brings about that change and that enables the life of grace to transform us such that life in God becomes conscious, spontaneous and ultimately deliberate.<sup>130</sup> There is, however, a further development that occurs when we continue the work of becoming ourselves. This is the experience of letting ourselves be “carried along.”<sup>131</sup> In our growing intimacy with God we increasingly experience ourselves living more and more a life in relationship with Christ. In that relationship we grow in the capacity to be attentive to the consolation without previous cause and move closer to living a mysticism as a “whole way of life.”

We must ask, however, how ordinary people living ordinary lives within the subjective field of common sense, rather than reflecting within the realm of theory upon their epistemological processes, know that God has directed them into a certain action. It matters not whether that action is the outcome of a major vocational decision or simply the outworking of everyday life lived in prayerful, faith-filled intimacy with God. In both cases people can claim to “know” God has led them in that direction. In effect we are considering, now with the aid of Lonergan’s analysis, the question of how we know a felt conviction about a particular choice is objectively correct before God.<sup>132</sup>

#### 4. How Do We Know We Have Heard God?

The foundational experience for hearing God’s call to a major vocational decision may be triggered by a conversation with a loved and respected person; it may be an ongoing desire or thought that constantly intrudes into awareness; it may be from a dream as it was in the case of Joseph’s call to go to Egypt (Mt 1:20).<sup>133</sup> The feelings aroused by this experience can

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<sup>129</sup> Lonergan, “Mediation of Christ in Prayer,” 179.

<sup>130</sup> Lonergan, “Mediation of Christ in Prayer,” 179.

<sup>131</sup> Lonergan, “Mediation of Christ in Prayer,” 180.

<sup>132</sup> Balthasar, *Prayer*, 19.

<sup>133</sup> While I here consider a major decision, the principles I elaborate below are also applicable to relatively minor decision-making.

be quite intense and we typically readily advert to them. Most popular books encouraging sensitivity to the Holy Spirit refer to this type of inspiration.<sup>134</sup> In such instances, the “object” eliciting one’s attention is either without, in the case of circumstances, or within, in the case of thoughts and feelings.

An authentic response will originate from our basic orientation towards self-transcendence.<sup>135</sup> This orientation will elicit, first, attentiveness to the experience, whether it arises from an object within or without; secondly, intelligent understanding of that experience; thirdly, rational reflection on the understanding; and fourthly, responsible deliberation about possible courses of action in response to that reflection.<sup>136</sup> Each of these levels has its own “self-taste,” to take up Lonergan’s allusion to Gerard Manley Hopkins. Lonergan refers somewhat lyrically to the variety of the “tastes” available for savouring:

[There is the] spontaneous vitality of our sensitivity, the shrewd intelligence of our inquiring, the detached rationality of our demand for evidence, the peace of a good conscience and the disquiet released by memory of words wrongly said or deeds wrongly done.<sup>137</sup>

While training can develop an awareness of these different levels of consciousness, in all people there is a “unity” and “harmony” to the experience of consciousness, and to the accompanying dynamic of self-transcendence, before any such training occurs.<sup>138</sup> Lonergan notes,

[S]elf-transcendence is so radically and so completely the inner dynamism of human reality that one cannot but be aware when one is moving towards it and, on the

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<sup>134</sup> See, for example, Ken Barker, *Becoming Fire: A Spiritual Journey of Faith* (Melbourne: Freedom, 2001), 150.

<sup>135</sup> Bernard J. F. Lonergan, “Second Lecture: Religious Knowledge,” in *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J.*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (New York: 1985), 131.

<sup>136</sup> For Lonergan’s articulation of the dynamics of self-transcending intentionality, see, for example, Lonergan, *Method in Theology*; Bernard J. F. Lonergan, “The Subject,” in *A Second Collection: Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J.*, ed. William F.J. Ryan and Bernard J. Tyrrell (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974); Lonergan, *Insight*; Lonergan, “Religious Knowledge,” 131-132.

<sup>137</sup> Lonergan, “Religious Knowledge,” 132.

<sup>138</sup> For the observation that the different kinds of awareness accompanying different acts “cumulate into unities” see Lonergan, *Insight*, 324-325.

other hand, one cannot but feel constrained to conceal the fact when one is evading the abiding imperative of what it is to be human."<sup>139</sup>

In other words, we know when we are making good or bad decisions if we attend to the "self-taste" when deciding. An authentic response to the exigence for self-transcendence will be the guarantor of objectivity since, as Lonergan explains, "Objectivity is the fruit of authentic subjectivity" within the realm mediated by meaning.<sup>140</sup>

The capacity to be alert to one's "self-taste" is particularly pertinent to the foundational experience of presence to self and to the subsequent exercise of discernment. While there are epistemological differences between Rahner and Lonergan, the experience relevant for our current enterprise is foundational for them both. Rahner's "simple presence" or "pure openness," or Lonergan's "self-presence" or "pure experience," is the essence of that which Balthasar describes as the "inmost I."<sup>141</sup> It is this "self-taste" of the existential subject that must be aligned with the object for discernment. In other words, an experience which is usually the "infrastructure" of knowledge itself becomes a significant part of the discernment process.<sup>142</sup>

It requires a high degree of self-awareness to develop the capacity to be attentive to this dimension of consciousness. Spiritual directors rarely encounter people with this capacity to objectify interiority. They usually encounter directees who insist that they "just know" or "intuit" that God is calling them to a particular task. They are unable to explain why they "just know." It is helpful in this context to draw on the work of Elizabeth Morelli to explain what otherwise remains a mysterious dynamic that is frequently encountered in spiritual

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<sup>139</sup> Lonergan, "Religious Knowledge," 133-134.

<sup>140</sup> Lonergan, "Religious Knowledge," 144. See also Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 265. Lonergan differentiates the realm mediated by meaning from the realm of immediacy and of the "already-out-there-now," for which see Lonergan, "Religious Knowledge," 144.

<sup>141</sup> Balthasar, *Prayer*, 19; Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Understanding and Being: An Introduction and Companion to Insight*, ed. Elizabeth A. Morelli and Mark D. Morelli (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1980), 171; Lonergan, "Religious Experience," 116; Rahner, "The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge," 158.

<sup>142</sup> Lonergan, "Religious Experience," 116. For the observation that such experience is a "preliminary unstructured sort of awareness," see Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *The Ontological and the Psychological Constitution of Christ*, The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol. 7 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 157n175.

direction. Morelli explores the basis for the confident assertion by devout people, that they “just know” they have heard from God, by considering the notion of “women’s intuition.”<sup>143</sup>

Morelli reflects on the various ways in which women’s knowing has been conceived (or misconceived) over the centuries. Drawing on Lonergan for her analysis, she concludes that a claim to “just know” is in fact a judgement, an announcement of assured knowledge.<sup>144</sup>

Morelli argues that the reason women usually attribute their knowing to “intuition” is simply that they have failed to appreciate the conscious acts implicit in their knowing. Morelli explains her Lonergan-informed understanding:

What is called “women’s intuition” is . . . a matter of pre-reflective or unobjectified conscious acts of perception, intelligence, affectivity, and reason. In pronouncing what she ‘just knows,’ a woman is simply objectifying the end-product of a series of conscious and intentional, but pre-reflective, operations.<sup>145</sup>

In instancing a mother’s knowing that her daughter was going to have a car accident after her date had picked her up, Morelli cites a range of activities that contribute to the judgement of probability that constitutes the mother’s knowing: “sensory, affective, imaginative, intelligent and rational.”<sup>146</sup> In this instance there was much sensory data available for processing. The mother heard the car and the way her daughter’s date drove. She was attuned to her daughter’s mood, envisaged various developments and so on. Morelli acknowledges that there may be occasions when the data that contributes to knowing is extrasensory. Morelli refers here to knowing what is going to happen or to what has happened some distance away. In such instances no sensory data is immediately present. Yet, as Morelli points out, regardless of whether we can or cannot identify the source of the data, the data itself is not knowledge. Acts of reflection and understanding and judgement must occur before it can be so constituted.

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<sup>143</sup> Elizabeth A. Morelli, “Women’s Intuition: A Lonerganian Analysis,” in *Lonergan and Feminism*, ed. Cynthia S. W. Crysedale (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 72-87.

<sup>144</sup> Morelli, “Women’s Intuition: A Lonerganian Analysis,” 80.

<sup>145</sup> Morelli, “Women’s Intuition: A Lonerganian Analysis,” 81.

<sup>146</sup> Morelli, “Women’s Intuition: A Lonerganian Analysis,” 81.

Morelli's considerations are pertinent to the knowledge present in the realm of religious and, in particular, of those apophatic mystical experiences best described as an "experience of non-experience." Here there are no readily identifiable somatic sensations, but nevertheless there is data of consciousness accompanied by sensations which can only be described as spiritual. When, for example, a subject has received what Evelyn Underhill refers to as an "intellectual vision," wherein the "eyes of the soul behold a plenitude . . . which is not bodily but spiritual" and of which nothing can be said, there still remains the task of reflecting upon the experience and arriving at a judgement of truth concerning it.<sup>147</sup> Hence, a dynamic similar to the instance upon which Morelli reflects is operative in the claim to "know" that God has called, for here too there occurs a judgement derived from unobjectified conscious acts, which with training and practice become more readily objectified. The point I have laboured to make is that such training and practice can aid us in developing the awareness of God's leading in the moment by moment decisions of everyday life.

The next chapter will explore more nuanced notions of self-awareness and the consequences of such awareness for discernment. I will draw on the work of Robert Doran who, influenced by both Lonergan and Balthasar, assists in understanding the development of enlightened common sense. His concept of psychic conversion and his articulation of the more finely tuned receptivity to revelation that such conversion supports are particularly helpful. Further, Doran demonstrates that Balthasar and Lonergan complement each other in their understanding of the human person. In so doing he counters those who would argue that Balthasar would have objected to Lonergan's theological approach in much the same way that he objected to Rahner's theological approach.

## 5. Summary and Conclusion

Both Balthasar and Lonergan recognise that an experience of unity and integration will accompany the discovery of one's vocation. While Balthasar offers only a descriptive account

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<sup>147</sup> Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness* (New York: Dutton, 1961), 282. For the distinctions between intellectual, imaginary and corporeal visions, see Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness*, 181.

derived from faculty psychology, Lonergan explains the unity in terms of the dynamics of self-transcending intentionality. In particular he points to the importance of attentiveness to empirical experience and to the experience of the “self-taste” of one’s presence to self. Such awareness, which is usually the “infrastructure” of knowledge, becomes itself a significant part of the discernment process.

Self-transcendence only occurs through conversion. It is religious conversion that generates love for God and that leads people to attend to God’s call to a particular vocation with its unique expression in mission. Lonergan offers categories to explain this phenomenon. He observes that we have a capacity to intimate a “known unknown.” For the one on an existential quest this unknown manifests as a “more” that will ultimately bring rest. Attentiveness to the empirical data of consciousness will yield the “light” that guides to finding the “more.”

Tad Dunne’s study of what he does when he paints suggests that those seeking God’s will could well attend to the somatic dimensions of their being to recognise the felt-sense of a response to beauty. We can be stymied in our response to beauty and in our surrender to the call to conversion by bias and prejudice, which are expressions of the deformative effects of sin that Ignatius recognises. Lonergan insists that only self-transcending openness will counter these. Prayer is an essential counteractive agent, and consequently Lonergan proposes the precept “Pray without ceasing.” Hence, I suggest that it is important to attend to the embodied, felt-sense of our experience of mystery, of a “known unknown,” with prayerful openness and to work at freeing ourselves from the deformative effects of bias in attending to this mysterious unknown. Finally, in regard to how spiritual directors deal with the confident assertion, “I have heard God,” I suggest that an analysis of what people mean when they refer to “women’s intuition” has applicability here.

While Lonergan’s analytical skills complement Balthasar’s approach, ultimately I suggest that Lonergan is unable to account for all the facets of our engagement with God. Subsequent chapters will look to Robert Doran and the postmodernists to complement Lonergan’s work. Here the exercise of reverse intentionality in the surrender to God’s gift of grace, through valuing symbolic and affective dimensions of the psyche, will be shown to be an important component of our encounter with mystery.



## CHAPTER 6

### PSYCHE, SENSATION AND ATTUNEMENT

So far I have proposed that Bernard Lonergan's analysis of human consciousness complements Hans Urs von Balthasar's efforts to articulate the unity of the human being, a unity that is necessary for engagement with mystery and the discernment of vocation. Yet there are some who would discount the possibility of conversation between Lonergan and Balthasar. This chapter considers these criticisms. It then looks to Robert Doran who builds on the work of Lonergan from a perspective that also appreciates Balthasar's contribution. Doran supplements Lonergan's work when he proposes that a psychic conversion is necessary for the exercise of human authenticity and for the development of a discerning life that is alert and receptive to God's grace. Doran's consideration of the relationship between Bernard Lonergan and the Ignatian tradition that formed Lonergan is particularly pertinent, as is Doran's discussion of attunement to God.

Consequently, I present this chapter under the following headings:

1. A Collision of Perspectives?
2. Engagement with Mystery and Psychic Conversion
3. Psyche: The Mediation of Matter and Spirit
4. Discernment, Attunement and Rest
5. Summary and Conclusion

#### 1. A Collision of Perspectives?

Given the dispute between Hans Urs von Balthasar and Karl Rahner, as well as the apparent similarities between the transcendentalism of Rahner and Lonergan, some might argue that Hans Urs von Balthasar cannot provide an authentic precursor to a discussion that includes Bernard Lonergan.<sup>1</sup> I offer a brief account of that dispute before indicating some significant ways in which Rahner and Lonergan differ.

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<sup>1</sup> For the dispute between Balthasar and Rahner, see Dalzell, *Dramatic Encounter*, 25-37; Nichols, "Rahner and Balthasar," 107-128; Williams, "Balthasar and Rahner," 11-34; Williams, "Balthasar, Rahner and Being," 86-105.

Karl Rahner considers that an explicit commitment to Christ is not necessary for the exercise of the theological virtues.<sup>2</sup> For Rahner all people—Christian and non-Christian—can experience the fruit of “self-realization” by, to use a Christian metaphor, taking up their cross.<sup>3</sup> By this Rahner means a readiness to accept the limitations of particular circumstances. It is an acceptance that provides, for Rahner, the opportunity to discover the fullness available in a future that is experienced in what can only be called “God.”<sup>4</sup> There may be no explicit faith stance, yet through accepting loss and in abandonment to mystery, a person participates, albeit anonymously so to speak, in Christ.<sup>5</sup>

Balthasar objects to Rahner’s position because it presumes that “a grace that is formally and materially Christological” is available to all, regardless of whether they profess to be Christians or not.<sup>6</sup> For Balthasar the revelation of the fullness of God’s light and life effects an “ontological and epistemological elevation and illumination” in an individual. While Balthasar accepts that this manifestation of God is present to all people given that all are called to the eternal beatific vision, he insists that only obedient receptivity to the radiant light of faith will proportion an individual’s whole being such that receptivity to the divine mystery occurs.<sup>7</sup> This transformation transcends that which is available through merely naturally graced means, as Rahner would allow.

There are also Christological concerns. In Balthasar’s estimation Rahner lacks an adequate *theologia crucis*.<sup>8</sup> Balthasar considers, first, that Rahner fails to recognise the distinctiveness

<sup>2</sup> Williams, “Balthasar, Rahner and Being,” 87.

<sup>3</sup> Karl Rahner, “Self-Realization and Taking Up One’s Cross,” in *Theological Investigations* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1972), 253-257.

<sup>4</sup> Rahner, “Self-Realization and Taking Up One’s Cross,” 254-255.

<sup>5</sup> Rahner, “Self-Realization and Taking Up One’s Cross,” 256.

<sup>6</sup> See Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 3*, 456.

<sup>7</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 165, 167.

<sup>8</sup> Williams, “Balthasar, Rahner and Being,” 99. I agree with Williams’ view that Balthasar is being inappropriately harsh, since Rahner does have a theology of death, and does recognise the significance of the paschal mystery

of Christ's call on an individual's life and, secondly, that he fails to recognise the role that conscious identification with Christ crucified must take in forming that individual's life. The Cordula in *The Moment of Christian Witness* exemplifies Balthasar's point, since it refers to the Cordula who gave herself as an offering to the Huns.<sup>9</sup> Balthasar considers that living as one who has died and risen is central to true Christian witness. That death may occur physically in martyrdom, it may occur through the full adoption of the evangelical counsels, or it may occur in the ordinary living out of the identification with Christ's paschal mystery in baptism.<sup>10</sup> To ignore this dynamic, as Balthasar considers Karl Rahner does, is to ignore the distinctiveness of Christian witness. Balthasar avers that it is not enough merely to accept the vicissitudes of daily living without an explicit faith in Jesus Christ.

Given Balthasar's strident disagreements with Rahner, some have argued that Balthasar would similarly reject the position of Bernard Lonergan insofar as it appears similar to Rahner's. If this were so, it would invalidate the approach taken in this study whereby I argue that Balthasar and Lonergan together serve our quest to understand the vocational means of resolving an existential self-question through conscious engagement with mystery. Certainly Rahner and Lonergan are often labelled with the same philosophical tag. Yet while Robert Doran recognises that there is continuity from Rousselot through Maréchal, to Rahner and Lonergan in a tradition frequently called "transcendental Thomism," he nevertheless insists that such labels fail to recognise clear distinctions between them.<sup>11</sup> A major difference is epistemological. While Rahner conflates self-presence with knowledge, Lonergan distinguishes them.<sup>12</sup> Further, Lonergan is not subject to the tension between

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for the human person, for an example of which see Rahner, "Self-Realization and Taking Up One's Cross," 253-257.

<sup>9</sup> Balthasar, *The Moment of Christian Witness*, 81. Balthasar here cites *The Legend of the Eleven Thousand Virgins*.

<sup>10</sup> Balthasar, *The Moment of Christian Witness*, 86.

<sup>11</sup> See Robert M. Doran, "Bernard Lonergan and the Functions of Systematic Theology," *Theological Studies* 59, no. 4 (1998): 602-603; Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 86.

<sup>12</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 320, 322; Lonergan, "Christ as Subject," 165; Raymond Moloney, "The Mind of Christ in Transcendental Theology: Rahner, Lonergan and Crowe," *The Heythrop Journal* 25 (1984): 289.

human consciousness and Christian revelation in the way that Rahner is.<sup>13</sup> For Lonergan revelation is sourced from a totally objective centre. Because of the isomorphism of knowing and being, being is able to be objectively real while still requiring the cognitional structure of humanity for its appropriation.<sup>14</sup> This distinction is not present in Rahner's idealism. In contrast to Rahner Lonergan has a Christological emphasis and points to the mediating role that Christ takes in our spiritual life, a perspective that Balthasar would support.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, there are many respects in which Lonergan and Rahner differ.<sup>16</sup> While ultimately I do not consider that Balthasar would have had a Rahnerian type of objection to Lonergan, we need also to consider whether Lonergan would have objected to Balthasar's approach.

Potworowski has asked whether Lonergan would propose that Balthasar's is a "counter-position."<sup>17</sup> In other words, is Balthasar making a claim that is incompatible with the exercise of authenticity?<sup>18</sup> Some postmodernists influenced by Balthasar do make such an error. Lawrence cites Derrida who "rightly rejects counterpositions of conceptualism and perceptualism" but in so doing establishes a reverse counterposition. In his rejection of both the naïve realist's "out there" and the idealist's "in here," Derrida fails to identify a position on normativity. Understandably, such a counterposition, as Lonergan would express it, will

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<sup>13</sup> Moloney, "Conversion and Spirituality," 131. See also Raymond Moloney, "Rahner and Lonergan on Spirituality," *Louvain Studies* 28, no. 4 (2003): 295-310. For a consideration of Rahner, Lonergan and Balthasar in the context of different approaches to the experience of God, see Anthony J. Kelly and Francis J. Moloney, *Experiencing God in the Gospel of John* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2003), 4-9.

<sup>14</sup> Lonergan, "The Subject," 71-72.

<sup>15</sup> Lonergan, "Mediation of Christ in Prayer," 160-182. For further reflections on Rahner and Lonergan from the point of view of systematic theology, see Neil J. Ormerod, "Two Points or Four?—Rahner and Lonergan on Trinity, Incarnation, Grace, and Beatific Vision," *Theological Studies* 68, no. 3 (2007): 661-673.

<sup>16</sup> The limits of this study do not permit an exploration of further differences between Lonergan and Rahner on the questions of the relationship between created and uncreated grace, as well as the mysteries of the Trinity, incarnation and the beatific vision. See, for example, Robert M. Doran, "Consciousness and Grace," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 11, no. 1 (1993): 63; Ormerod, "Two Points or Four?," 661-673.

<sup>17</sup> For Lonergan a counterposition refuses to hold one of the following tenets: that "the real is the concrete universe of being," that "the subject becomes known when it affirms itself intelligently and reasonably and so is not known yet in any prior 'existential' state," and that "objectivity is conceived as a consequence of intelligent inquiry and critical reflection, and not as a property of vital anticipation, extroversion, and satisfaction," for which see Lonergan, *Insight*, 388.

<sup>18</sup> Potworowski, "Christian Experience in Hans Urs von Balthasar," 108.

issue in a state of disorientation and a consequent inability to experience the tranquil fruits of authenticity.<sup>19</sup>

Balthasar adamantly rejects what Lonergan would refer to as the counter-position of the naïve realist's point of view. Instead, Balthasar insists on access to truth derived from subjective engagement with the object, an approach that for Lonergan constitutes a "position." Robert Doran also supports the view that Balthasar is not a naïve realist.<sup>20</sup> Granted that Balthasar's term, *Wahrnehmen*, may well seem to indicate a naïve realism, both Balthasar himself and Robert Doran insist that the "taking to be true" of an aesthetic form is not a matter of perceiving something "out there."<sup>21</sup> The appropriation of a form, a *Gestalt*, is a matter of profound engagement between all facets of the object and one's interiority. The fact that Balthasar, like Lonergan, adopts a critically realist approach to his work provides a common foundation for conversation between them.

Robert Doran makes a further contribution when he suggests that Balthasar and Lonergan, far from being antagonistic to one another, are in fact complementary. Doran argues that Balthasar makes a "brilliant" contribution to the Lonerganian enterprise when he proposes special theological categories that are derived from the aesthetic-dramatic patterns of human consciousness.<sup>22</sup> Yet Doran serves us, not only in his reconciliation of Balthasar and Lonergan, but also by his profound insights into the interiority of the human person. Robert Doran, too, is interested in the way in which human beings are receptive to the mystery of Christian revelation.

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<sup>19</sup> Lawrence, "Fragility of Consciousness," 74. For Lonergan's succinct distinctions between naïve realism, various forms of idealism (Berkeley's naïve, Kant's critical and Hegel's absolute), and his own position of critical realism, see Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 262-265.

<sup>20</sup> See Robert M. Doran, "Reception and Elemental Meaning: An Expansion of the Notion of Psychic Conversion," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 20, no. 2 (2004): 133-134.

<sup>21</sup> See Balthasar, *Glory* 1, 535; Doran, "Reception and Elemental Meaning," 134.

<sup>22</sup> Robert M. Doran, "Lonergan and Balthasar: Methodological Considerations," *Theological Studies* 58, no. 1 (1997): 62, 67; Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 86, 88. For Lonergan's identification of different patterns of human experience as biological, aesthetic, intellectual and dramatic, see Lonergan, *Insight*, 181-189. For Lonergan's distinction between general and special theological categories, see Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 285-293.

## 2. Engagement with Mystery and Psychic Conversion

With Balthasar and Lonergan, Robert Doran addresses the issue of mystery and seeks (even if, as he describes it, with a self-deprecatory “stutter”) to provide explanatory grounds for a systematic theology that engages mystery.<sup>23</sup> Doran’s work complements Lonergan’s foundational thinking in a way that helps us to identify the dynamics of attentive receptivity to God’s grace. Doran, a Jesuit priest trained in Jungian techniques, recognises the importance of attentiveness to feeling and symbol in the process of developing an authentic humanity. Early in his reflection on Lonergan’s work, he offers the notion of “psychic conversion.”<sup>24</sup> Doran’s notion of psychic conversion adds embodiment to what Doran argues is otherwise too thin a concept of experience in Lonergan, and hence enables the outworking of Christian praxis to be more substantial.

Doran supports Lonergan’s proposal for a theology based not on classical norms but on an appreciation of situations with consequences that are “existential, interpersonal, historical, and practical.”<sup>25</sup> It is not sufficient for Christians merely to believe true and good things; we must value and enact them also.<sup>26</sup> Hence, orthopraxis becomes a primary concern and not merely orthodoxy.<sup>27</sup> Doran would argue that orthopathy is an essential component of effective praxis.<sup>28</sup> “Right feeling,” or the capacity for affectivity appropriate to the circumstance, is the outcome of the psychic conversion that Doran proposes. Appropriate

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<sup>23</sup> For Doran’s approach to systematic theology, see Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 5; Doran, “Bernard Lonergan and the Functions of Systematic Theology,” 569-607; Robert M. Doran, “System and History: The Challenge to Catholic Systematic Theology,” *Theological Studies* 60, no. 4 (1999): 652-678; Doran, *What is Systematic Theology*; Doran, “The Starting Point of Systematic Theology,” 750-776.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Robert M. Doran, “Psychic Conversion,” *The Thomist* 41, no. 1 (1977): 200-236; Robert M. Doran, *Psychic Conversion and Theological Foundations: Towards a Reorientation of the Human Sciences*, ed. Andrew Tallon, Rev. ed., Marquette Studies in Theology, vol. 51 (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2006).

<sup>25</sup> Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 3.

<sup>26</sup> Doran reflects on Marx’s insistence that integrity entails valuing the transformation of the world, for which see Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 11.

<sup>27</sup> For a discussion of orthopraxis see Frederick G. Lawrence, “Orthopraxis,” in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins, and Dermot A. Lane (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987), 733-736. See also Enrique Dussel, “Discernment: A Question of Orthodoxy or Orthopraxis,” *Concilium* (1979): 47-60.

<sup>28</sup> See Blackwood, “Jeremy Blackwood: Mixing Oil and Water.”

beliefs and authentic actions, accompanied by commensurately fitting feelings and emotions, will form people who are capable of discerning their unique contribution to the coming of the kingdom on earth.

Doran upholds Lonergan's position on the subject and constantly refers to this position for verification of his own contributions.<sup>29</sup> He identifies four stages in its development. The first is that developed in *Insight* where Lonergan discusses the elements that comprise a knower's self-affirmation.<sup>30</sup> Doran identifies two critical differentiations concerning the notion of consciousness that Lonergan articulates. First, consciousness is the "self-presence immanent in all cognitive operations" rather than perception or knowledge. Secondly, judgement is a constitutive component of knowing, towards which understanding contributes but from which understanding must be differentiated.<sup>31</sup>

Doran considers the second stage in Lonergan's notion of the subject, which occurred after the latter's study of human understanding. This stage addresses a third question for deliberation, namely "Is it worthwhile?"<sup>32</sup> Lonergan observes that such questions "do justice to sensitive presentations and representations" but notes that the latter are "strangely dissociated from the feelings that constitute the mass and momentum of our lives."<sup>33</sup> Doran implicitly adopts Lonergan's position that sensitive presentations lack meaning and value in themselves, and places the emphasis where Lonergan places it, namely on the feelings that enable us to apprehend value. I agree that often we are dissociated from our sensate experiences within the common sense realm of meaning.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, I suggest that they

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<sup>29</sup> Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 19. For Doran's succinct presentation of Lonergan's position in contrast to the counter-position of idealism, which accepts the turn to the subject, and that of naïve realism, which rejects the turn to the subject, see Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 25.

<sup>30</sup> See Lonergan, *Insight*, 319-347.

<sup>31</sup> Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 25-26.

<sup>32</sup> The first two questions were addressed in the process of coming to know, namely, questions for intelligence and for reflection.

<sup>33</sup> Lonergan, "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness," 173.

<sup>34</sup> For Lonergan's discussion of the different realms of meaning as common sense, theory, interiority and transcendence, and for different functions of meaning as cognitive, constitutive, efficient and communicative, see Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 81-85.

can assume value within the realms of theory and interiority when appropriate mindfulness training gives them meaning in themselves.<sup>35</sup> The more psycho-dynamically oriented Doran does not address this dimension. Nevertheless, his contribution has immense practical significance. With Lonergan, he points to the “practical, interpersonal, and existential dimensions” of questions for deliberation.<sup>36</sup>

As primary features of this second stage in Lonergan’s thinking, Doran identifies “feelings, moral self-transcendence, a scale of values, judgements of value, and decision.”<sup>37</sup> All these elements are critical components of the process of discernment. Careful attention to the dynamic of self-transcending intentional consciousness and to that which we consider to be of highest value is essential at this stage. Affective awareness is foundational for the process:

Fidelity to the notion of value involves the delicate and sustained negotiation of affectivity, until our feelings spontaneously respond to an ordered scale of values. Then and only then is there reached the relative stability of affective integrity.<sup>38</sup>

It is a “delicate” task, that of being attentive to our own affectivity. Yet it brings a blessed prize, which Doran explains in terms of “affective integrity”:

Affective integrity is a habitual abiding in a tension of opposites, an aesthetic detachment that allows there to emerge the inevitability of form, an equilibrium that is no mere homeostasis, but rather the calm assurance and serenity of the woman or man who knows that faithful perseverance in the spirit of inquiry operating from below, sustained by the gift of divine and human love working from above, is the source from which there can authentically be constituted the first and only edition of oneself.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> The many mindfulness strategies now available help to extend awareness, for which see, for example, Cayoun, *Mindfulness-integrated Cognitive Behaviour Therapy*; Robert A. Jonas, “Christian Mindfulness and Emptiness,” (2006), <http://www.emptybell.org/> (accessed April 25, 2007); Kabat-Zinn, *Coming to Our Senses*; Daniel J. Siegel, “Mindful Awareness, Mindsight, and Neural Integration,” *The Humanistic Psychologist* 37, no. 2 (2009); Siegel, *Mindsight*.

<sup>36</sup> See Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 27; Lonergan, “Natural Right and Historical Mindedness,” 173.

<sup>37</sup> Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 27.

<sup>38</sup> Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 27.

<sup>39</sup> Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 55.



It is this state of “calm assurance and serenity,” a condition similar to that of Ignatian indifference, that provides the optimal conditions for nurturing the capacity for discernment of one’s vocation. The state requires the capacity to negotiate dialectic, to negotiate a tension of opposites. The “opposites” are those of spirit and matter, and of intentionality and sensitive presentation, out of which arise the imagery and symbolism that provide the means for a transcendent reconciliation.<sup>40</sup> Such is the activity of the “sensitive psyche” wherein neuropsychological dynamics manifest in sensation, imagery and emotion. It is through the sensitive psyche that “we feel our participation in the intelligibility, truth, and goodness of being as these are reached in our acts of meaning and love.”<sup>41</sup> Each stage of self-transcending intentional consciousness carries its own feeling tone. Development of the capacity to be aware of the feelings accompanying each stage furthers growth in authenticity and aids alignment with the will of God.

Doran states that Lonergan’s emphasis on love comprises a third stage in the development of the latter’s notion of the person. Love is the term of self-transcendence, expressed most fully when God’s love floods our hearts. It grounds the fourth stage which Doran identifies in the development that occurred in Lonergan’s notion of the subject, namely the notion of movements from below and above. Lonergan refers to these movements as creating and healing vectors, for he identifies a creative movement from below and a healing movement from above.<sup>42</sup> In the interaction between these creative and healing movements, general categories of human consciousness from below engage with special theological categories derived from above:

When a person has fallen in love with God, basic features of human consciousness enter into the descending movement of love and grace, enabling this latter to attain a certain level of human development as it flows into the various aspects of human life.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 55.

<sup>41</sup> Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 55.

<sup>42</sup> See Lonergan, “Healing and Creating,” 100-109. See also Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 31-33.

<sup>43</sup> Moloney, “Conversion and Spirituality,” 131.

Abandonment to God's guidance thereby occurs, creating a change in the expression of a person's pattern of living, a change that aligns choices and actions with God's will. These choices and actions achieve a further effect, namely a social orientation in the service of the community.<sup>44</sup> The descending movement from above engages more and more fully with the dynamic of vertical finality moving from below and increasingly enters into all aspects of a person's life. It infuses the creative movement from below with a new dynamic of vitality and inspiration. Both movements are necessary for development; each complements the other. In summary, surrender to love is essential for the healing that allows the activities of self-transcendence and the discernment of God's will to become a life-long task. Such surrender occurs within the context of a dynamism that emerges from both below and above.

The ready flow of intentional consciousness into the dramatic pattern that typifies ordinary living can, however, be easily interrupted by the exercise of bias. Doran points to the dialectic implicit in Lonergan's notion of the subject. On the one hand, our physical, neurological processes exercise their own demands for integration at a higher psychic level. On the other hand, a subject can exercise either a constructive or a repressive approach to these neural demands in the drama of his or her life.<sup>45</sup> It is in this context that Doran's proposal of a fourth, psychic conversion serves the development of greater integrity and authenticity.

Drawing on unpublished material, Dadosky notes that in fact Lonergan strongly supported Doran's expansion of the notion of conversion to include that of the psyche.<sup>46</sup> Lonergan was unsure as to how that fourth conversion should be named, referring to it as "aesthetic, or psychic or whatever you want to call it."<sup>47</sup> He nevertheless recognised the significant role

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<sup>44</sup> See Moloney, "Conversion and Spirituality," 131-132.

<sup>45</sup> See Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 211; Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 170.

<sup>46</sup> Lonergan observes that Doran's notion of psychic conversion "fits very adroitly and snugly" into his own work and that his "friend from Marquette" had convinced him that there was a fourth type of conversion, for which see Dadosky, "Healing the Psychological Subject," 78, 83.

<sup>47</sup> Verbatim transcript of a question and answer session, quoted in Dadosky, "Healing the Psychological Subject," 83.

that Robert Doran had played in clarifying the psychological dimensions of conversion. Lonergan considered that Doran had made an “advance” in his proposal of a fourth conversion. He refers to Doran’s innovation in these words:

It occurs when we uncover within ourselves the working of our own psyches, the *élan vital* . . . Now it is in the realm of symbols and stories, of what he terms the imaginal, that Professor Doran finds a deficiency in my work. With me he would ask “Why?” “Is that so?” “Is it worthwhile?” But to these three he would add a fourth. It is Heidegger’s *Befindlichkeit* taken as the existential question, “How do I feel?”<sup>48</sup>

Lonergan here demonstrates an appreciation of the importance of the feelings that accompany symbols, stories and our imagination.

Doran acknowledges that his notion of psychic conversion arose from his reading of Heidegger. Psychic conversion opens us to the *Befindlichkeit* dimension of that which is, or, in other words, to the “mood” that each one of us finds ourselves in each moment.<sup>49</sup> This “mood” is not disorderly moodiness but rather the spiritual (*geistliche*) tone that accompanies all thought and action.<sup>50</sup> This *Befindlichkeit* aspect of human experience is important also for Hans Urs von Balthasar who seeks to articulate the nature of the felt-sense of being emotionally, intellectually and spiritually integrated. Such integration occurs not merely in a particular faculty but in the whole of our being, enabling us to be attuned to God.<sup>51</sup>

To sustain an openness of our whole being requires that we refuse to exercise a repressive censorship upon our interiority but rather are open to constructive engagement with the

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<sup>48</sup> See Bernard J. F. Lonergan, “Reality, Myth and Symbol,” in *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980*, ed. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 390. To exemplify, Lonergan recommended the reading of Doran’s works, subsequently published as Robert M. Doran, *Subject and Psyche* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1994); Robert M. Doran, *Theological Foundations. Vol. 1: Intentionality and Psyche* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1995). See Lonergan, “Reality, Myth and Symbol,” 390n313.

<sup>49</sup> Doran, “Reception and Elemental Meaning,” 152. See also Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 126-127.

<sup>50</sup> Andrew Tallon, “Doctrinal Development and Wisdom: Rousselot on ‘Sympathetic Knowledge’ by Connaturality,” in *National Convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America* (Miami: Unpublished paper, 1999). I am indebted to Tallon for forwarding this paper to me.

<sup>51</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 241. For further references to the “feeling” that does not merely accompany intellect, will and the “spiritual” faculties but is the consequence of the “integration of the person’s whole life,” see Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 242, 243, 245.

dramatic patterns of our consciousness.<sup>52</sup> Through psychic conversion these patterns of consciousness, which inform daily living, open to considered reflection upon the images and symbols that arise spontaneously to awareness.<sup>53</sup> Pertinent to this spontaneity is Doran's identification of two dimensions of our immediacy in the world mediated by meaning: the cognitional and the dispositional. The former refers to our understanding, the latter to our mood. We can learn to objectify our cognitional processes through intellectual conversion and through the transcendental method that Lonergan articulates. Similarly, we can objectify the dispositional dimension through activities that use imagination and symbol.<sup>54</sup> Doing the latter unlocks the psychic dimensions of our interiority. It makes available for conscious reflection data derived from engagement with the transcendent realm, which might otherwise remain unconscious. It serves the development of the felt-sense of the sensitive dimensions of our human being.

The development of this awareness occurs in the context of the transformation that psychic conversion brings about and in the attendant interiorly differentiated consciousness. This consciousness draws upon a "preconscious neural" level and is alert to the empirical dimension of the psyche.<sup>55</sup> Doran argues that transformation at these depths has eventual ramifications for the development of a capacity for "'universal willingness' or total being-in-love or charity."<sup>56</sup> This only occurs, however, insofar as such a psyche is open to the movement from neural to psychic dimensions and insofar as this psyche also considers the full range of the meaning that these dimensions yield. In other words, such transformation has ramifications for the full heights of the human expression of love of God and of neighbour, and hence for vocational outworking.

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<sup>52</sup> Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 142.

<sup>53</sup> Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 286.

<sup>54</sup> Doran, "Psychic Conversion," 204.

<sup>55</sup> Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 112. For Doran's discussion of the self-appropriation that supports an interiorly differentiated consciousness, see Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 43-47.

<sup>56</sup> Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 111-112. Doran here refers to the "sensitive and imaginal materials and the received meanings and values."

A psyche that has undergone the type of conversion proposed by Doran will be attentively receptive to the flow of consciousness, which occurs at an empirical level, and will accord meaning and value to that data, regardless of whether it has psychological or spiritual significance. When a subject considers data derived from both psyche and body (*soma*), we apply the term “psychosomatic” to such material. I suggest that when a subject considers data derived from the engagement of spirit (*pneuma*) and body, we apply the term “pneumo-somatic.” Such a category is particularly pertinent to our endeavours to sensitise people to the impact of mystery on embodied consciousness.

While Doran acknowledges the neural foundation for psychic functioning, he does not appreciate that the ensuing sensations, which subsequently produce symbols at the psychic level, can be meaningful in themselves. Similarly, when Lonergan attempts to describe Doran’s innovation, he too focuses on the elements of symbol, story and imagination, a focus in accord with Doran’s. It would appear that both Lonergan and Doran fail to appreciate the full significance and value of the neural and sensate dimensions in enabling human beings to engage with mystery. Nevertheless, to the extent that Doran emphasises the role of symbol and imagination, he does help to heighten our awareness of the empirical dimensions of human functioning. This is a first step towards an appreciation of the mediation of matter and spirit within the human person. We turn now to a more extended discussion of this engagement.

### 3. Psyche: The Mediation of Matter and Spirit

The Jungian-trained Doran constantly appeals to depth psychology and dream analysis as the critical elements that support psychic conversion.<sup>57</sup> Reflecting on Jung in numerous studies, Doran engages Jung’s method of mediating between matter and spirit.<sup>58</sup> Jung’s work

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<sup>57</sup> Therapists of other persuasions would point to different strategies in the service of the same transformation, namely an awareness of the symbolic, image-making capacity of embodied consciousness. See, for example, Eugene T. Gendlin, *Focusing* (New York: Bantam Books, 1981); Leslie S. Greenberg, Jeanne C. Watson, and Germain Lietaer, *Handbook of Experiential Psychotherapy* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1998). Later, Doran came to acknowledge that Gendlin’s work provides easier access, than does dream-analysis alone, to the realm of psychic conversion, for which see Doran, *Psychic Conversion and Theological Foundations*, 13, 161, 215.

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, Doran, “Psychic Conversion,” 200-236; Robert M. Doran, “Aesthetic Subjectivity and Generalized Empirical Method,” *The Thomist* 43 (1979): 257-278; Doran, *Subject and Psyche*; Robert M. Doran,

enlarged Doran's understanding of the psyche, enabling him to appreciate that the data that inform depth psychological approaches are also pertinent to the self-appropriation of the subject. Hence, "sensations, memories, emotions, conations, associations, bodily movements and spontaneous intersubjective responses [and] the symbolic integrations of these that occur in . . . our dreams" all contribute to our flow of consciousness.<sup>59</sup> Such data mediate between the organic and spiritual dimensions of our human being.

While therapy can be one means of enabling cooperation with this psychic material, which issues in an opportunity for authentically living the drama of life, a regular habit of prayer, meditation and reflection can also develop such cooperation. Ultimately there can evolve in cooperation with grace a capacity for freedom from determinisms, a freedom to be the authentic expression of the unique individual one is called to be. Doran speaks of this accomplishment as "dramatic artistic affectivity" which is a "taut equilibrium . . . between the organic and the spiritual."<sup>60</sup> The appropriate use of imagery is a major means of mediating between these two dimensions of human functioning.

Doran stresses the importance of imagery, which occurs prior to insight and reflection. For Thomas Aquinas, who influences both Lonergan and Doran, concepts derive from imagery. The failure to attend to imagery results in a conceptualism that ignores the experiential component of authentic self-transcendence and relies instead on a disembodied attempt to understand without images. While Aquinas, and Lonergan after him, appropriately emphasises the experiential role of imagery as foundational for authentic conceptualisation, imagery derives from bodily sensations, attention to which is itself valuable. As I noted previously, however, the Jungian-influenced Doran pays relatively little attention to this earlier sensory stage, for his focus is on the symbolic meaning of the images deriving from sensation.

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"Jung and Catholic Theology," in *Catholicism and Jungian Psychology*, ed. J. Marvin Spiegelman (Phoenix, Arizona: Falcon Press, 1988), 41-73; Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*; Robert M. Doran, "Jung, Gnosis, and Faith Refused," *CrossCurrents* 43, no. 3 (1993): 307-323; Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*

<sup>59</sup> Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 46.

<sup>60</sup> Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 55.

Images unite body and spirit, the latter being understood as intentional self-transcendence. Doran observes that the exercise of repression prevents images from coming to awareness, and thereby inhibits all subsequent intentional activity from consciously processing an experience. Indeed, pathology can be “a truncation of that natural orientation that Aquinas called *conversio ad phantasmata*.”<sup>61</sup> In such circumstances, there are no ensuing insights, no judgements, no authentic decisions and actions. On the other hand, psychic conversion achieves a “habitual *conversio ad phantasma*, a habitual being-at-home with, not being alienated from, the stream of an empirical consciousness that receives data mediated by meaning.”<sup>62</sup> Psychic conversion establishes a foundational capacity for habitual attentiveness to experience and in so doing provides the basis for an authentic exercise of intentionality.

When this capacity is lacking, there can be no authentic self-transcendence. This lack prevents us from constituting ourselves and blocks our psychological and spiritual development.<sup>63</sup> We can suffer from “pneumopathology,” a condition that arises when we fail to ask questions about the meaning and direction of our lives.<sup>64</sup> Authentic self-transcendence requires that we be attentive to our experience of the pulsing flow of life and ask questions about the direction, meaning and value of that flow. This dynamic is operative for those who have been stripped of masks and personas through suffering and who express their consequent existential suffering in the self-question, “Who am I?” It is operative also for those who intimate that the answer will be found in attentive listening for their vocation.

Doran insists that the “intelligent *question* for direction in the movement of life” must be given its “unique and distinct place in the ontological constitution of the person.”<sup>65</sup> With Eric Voegelin he objects to those psychologies that focus on motivation derived merely from

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<sup>61</sup> Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 115.

<sup>62</sup> Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 140.

<sup>63</sup> See Dadosky, “Healing the Psychological Subject,” 79; Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 59, 184.

<sup>64</sup> For Doran’s discussion of “pneumopathology,” see Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 281-284. Doran cites Eric Voegelin in this regard.

<sup>65</sup> Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 282. Emphasis original.

one's passions, and not on motivation derived from intentionality towards value. Attention to the spontaneous image- and symbol-making dimension of our psyche can mitigate the unfortunate development of a pneumopathology. Doran identifies three types of symbols that arise from images.<sup>66</sup> Two derive from the Jungian realms of the personal and collective unconscious. Doran adds a third, the anagogic.<sup>67</sup> The realm of the personal unconscious generates symbols with meaning derived from the individual's life experience. The realm of the collective unconscious generates self-transcendent symbols, allowing the whole field of collective human experience to inform the psyche. The anagogic symbol points towards the realm of absolute transcendence wherein it is no longer the personal or collective unconscious that informs the psyche but rather a transcendent source. A major source of anagogic symbols is the dream:

Such dreams are hermeneutic of the divine call to an ever more converted mode of living or to the execution of specific tasks. In them, the energy that is the cosmic and then the personal unconscious is the transparent medium of creative and redemptively healing power. The symbols of such dreams are anagogic.<sup>68</sup>

Energy that derives ultimately from a cosmic source, from God, penetrates through to the personal unconscious with a capacity for healing and transformation. For the Christian it is God who can generate a symbol "so concentrated in meaning as to contain within itself an unlimited feeling of desire or dread."<sup>69</sup> Doran cites symbols of Christ and Satan as exemplifying his point. While such symbols require the psyche as a medium, the psyche is no longer their source as is the case for those symbols derived from the realms of the personal and collective unconscious. Rather the absolutely transcendent is the source and, for the Christian, that transcendent is God. Anagogic symbols expressed in dreams of the night can

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<sup>66</sup> For a discussion of the range of symbolic expressions from "pure to the complex", see Dunne, "What Do I Do When I Paint?," 108. Dunne's point is that symbols shape our seeing such that what is seen without is informed by that which is within.

<sup>67</sup> Robert M. Doran, "Christ and the Psyche," in *Trinification of the World: A Festschrift in Honor of Frederick E. Crowe*, ed. Thomas A. Dunne and Jean-Marc Laporte (Toronto: Regis College Press, 1978), 134. See also Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 284-286.

<sup>68</sup> Doran, "Christ and the Psyche," 135.

<sup>69</sup> Joseph Flanagan, quoted in Doran, "Christ and the Psyche," 136. Today, following Jean-Luc Marion, we could refer to such symbols as "saturated" phenomena. See Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, trans. Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002); Jean-Luc Marion, "The Banality of Saturation," in *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, ed. Kevin Hart (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 383-418.



be the vehicle for God's call to mission and vocation. Such symbols can also arise in dreams of the day, for symbols occur not only in the relatively unconscious state of night-time dreaming, but also during times of prayer, meditation or even day-time reverie. Any practice that allows the ego to be free of its dominating role can enable the psyche to produce symbols charged with meaning.

Once we stop censoring the full range of symbols that can occur in the field of empirical consciousness, we have achieved psychic conversion.<sup>70</sup> The presence of psychic conversion enables a greater awareness of the "very movement of life" and of the very "passionateness of being."<sup>71</sup> We are much more open to the full range of data available to be processed for discernment. We can access the primary material so important for a life of authentic Christian witness.<sup>72</sup> Even though Doran has a great appreciation of Jung's contribution to a comprehensive insight into the nature of the human psyche, the use of Lonergan's analysis reveals a significant lack in Jung's approach. I turn now to reflect on Doran's integration of Lonergan and Jung.

For Lonergan the meaning of a symbol "has its proper context in the process of internal communication in which it occurs, and it is to that context with its associated images and feelings, memories and tendencies that the interpreter has to appeal if he would explain the symbol."<sup>73</sup> Given that the data of consciousness are both psychic and intentional, an increasing awareness of both sensitive inclinations and the dynamics of intentional consciousness that Lonergan articulates is essential.<sup>74</sup> For this reason, Doran rejects the Jungian approach alone as inadequate, since Jung fails to appreciate the intentional dimension of consciousness. Jungian dream analysis in the service of self-individuation

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<sup>70</sup> Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 111.

<sup>71</sup> Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 43. Doran here cites Lonergan, "Mission and the Spirit," 29-30.

<sup>72</sup> Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 43.

<sup>73</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 67.

<sup>74</sup> Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 44.

creates an intra-psychic “cul-de-sac.”<sup>75</sup> Consequently, the capacity to engage in intentionality analysis is a necessary complement to any in-depth psychological work.

Both Doran and Lonergan are concerned that subjects be attentive to imaginal and symbolic activities of their psyches. Yet neurological activity also underlies such processes. Ultimately, even this neurological activity is capable of transformation by grace. This is so because the sensitive psyche mediates between foundational neural processes and higher level psychic integrations. It is this that gives the accompanying felt-sense to our participation, through love, in the truth and goodness of being.<sup>76</sup> Lonergan argues that our “sensitive integrations” can be transformed through the exercise of faith, hope and love and that such transformation penetrates and envelops “the sensitive level.”<sup>77</sup> Balthasar, speaking more descriptively, opines that this transformation is manifested in the transformed sensibilities of Jesus, Mary and the saints.<sup>78</sup> Doran would concur with Balthasar in this regard. Rixon notes that for Doran the transformation of the cognitional and volitional dimensions of our being through contemplative, unitive prayer accompanies a transformation at the level of biology and psyche.<sup>79</sup>

Hence, prayerful engagement with God changes not only the spiritual and psychological dimensions of our being, but also the biological dimensions. It is this transformation that gives transcendent value and meaning even to our sensations. Moreover, it is the “sensitive transformation” at the point where value is determined that is the emphasis of this study, for, as noted in the previous chapter, an assessment of value is integrally connected with our feelings. Hearing God’s call and determining one’s vocation requires assessments of value

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<sup>75</sup> Doran, *Subject and Psyche*, 9.

<sup>76</sup> Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 55.

<sup>77</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 546, 723.

<sup>78</sup> See, for example, Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 378.

<sup>79</sup> Rixon, “Bernard Lonergan and Mysticism,” 486. In support of the argument for a link between spiritual awareness and psychobiological transformation, a parallel can be found in the empirically demonstrated link between self-esteem and cardiac vagal activity, for which see A. Martens, A. Greenberg, and J.J.B. Allen, “Self-Esteem and Autonomic Physiology: Parallels between Self-Esteem and Vagal Tone as Buffers of Threat,” *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 12 (2008): 370-389.

and attentiveness to the different feeling tones of those assessments. It requires attentiveness to the “sensitive” dimensions of the psyche. These sensitive psychic dimensions carry meaning to which we must learn to be receptive. In sum, Doran extends Lonergan’s proposals of interiorly differentiated and religiously differentiated consciousness to include a consciousness also alert to the empirical dimensions of the psyche, manifested primarily in imagery and symbol. Such alertness can give new meaning and value to even the most fundamental dimensions of human functioning.

Doran has extended his notion of psychic conversion to incorporate a fuller appreciation of the realm of meaning, and I now explore this further development in his thinking.<sup>80</sup> Lonergan observes that “past judgments remain with us . . . all we know is somehow with us.”<sup>81</sup> Reflecting on Lonergan’s observation, Doran suggests that all that has formed us determines that to which we will be open in the future, including meanings and values. There is an immediacy to the experience of these meanings and values.<sup>82</sup> Tad Dunne refers to a similar dynamic when he speaks of the artist’s “aesthetic seeing” that spontaneously organises all the elements in the visual field.<sup>83</sup> Meanings of this kind, Doran argues, are experienced at the level of empirical consciousness, and not merely derived from the dynamic of self-transcending intentionality working from below. Doran here expands his notion of psychic conversion to include the hermeneutical dimension. In so doing, he addresses not only Heidegger’s *Befindlichkeit* but also his notion of *Verstehen*, which Doran understands to be “an intelligent component that is at work in the very reception of meaningful data ‘from above.’”<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Dadosky, “Healing the Psychological Subject,” 157; Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 136-140.

<sup>81</sup> Lonergan, quoted in Doran, “Reception and Elemental Meaning,” 136, 137.

<sup>82</sup> Doran, following Lonergan, advises that this is what we mean by “mediated immediacy,” for which see Doran, “Reception and Elemental Meaning,” 137. For Lonergan’s distinction between the immediate presence of objects in, for example, sensory experience compared with meaning mediated to us through imagination, language and symbols, see Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 28. For Lonergan’s reference to “a mediated return to immediacy” in the context of love-making and mystical prayer, see Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 77. This is the type of immediacy to which Doran is referring.

<sup>83</sup> Dunne, “What Do I Do When I Paint?,” 106.

<sup>84</sup> Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 140.

Doran's elaboration on his notion of psychic conversion relies on a study of receptivity. He considers the issue from a point of view that includes the thought of Hans Urs von Balthasar.<sup>85</sup> A query concerning the validity of Balthasar's approach to reality provides Doran with his approach. As we noted earlier, Balthasar's references to "beholding" or seeing the form of Christ and Balthasar's use of the idea of taking, or perceiving, something to be true (*Wahrnehmen*) could subject him to the charge of naïve realism. Doran, too, asks how Balthasar can avoid this charge.<sup>86</sup> Drawing parallels with Heidegger, Doran's answer rests on according validity to the idea that we spontaneously receive meanings and values in the context of a movement that proceeds 'from above' in consciousness.<sup>87</sup> Hence, Balthasar's form, or *Gestalt*, comprises the empirical "reception" (and here Doran suggests an alternative term to receptivity) of "the intelligibility, truth, and value of communally sedimented meaning."<sup>88</sup> As such, Balthasar's form is not something that we merely gaze upon in the world "out there." Balthasar's reflections on the "act of seeing" provide further insight:

The rapture into the act of seeing is an indivisible unity both of the faith that loves Jesus and God in him . . . and of the fulfilment of his command of love of neighbour . . . Human personal seeing sees truly when it is prepared to receive (perceive) what spontaneously offers itself: here, the personal seeing is first of all a becoming aware, a hearing, which then – step by step – penetrates the sphere of understanding.<sup>89</sup>

Balthasar here refers to a holistic seeing of numerous and profound elements of an object. Such seeing has spiritual meaning and value. In this circumstance, both empirical experience and understanding spontaneously present themselves to consciousness. Balthasar here

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<sup>85</sup> For Lonerganian studies on receptivity, see Frederick E. Crowe, "Complacency and Concern in the Thought of St Thomas," *Theological Studies* 20, no. 1 (1959): 1-39, 198-230, 343-395; Robert M. Doran, "Complacency and Concern and a Basic Thesis on Grace," in *Lonergan Workshop*, ed. Fred Lawrence (Boston: Boston College, 1997), 57-78.

<sup>86</sup> For instances of Balthasar's use of *Wahrnehmen* see, for example, Balthasar, *Glory* 1, 10, 120.

<sup>87</sup> Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 124-125. Doran proposes that Heidegger's "preconceptual grasp of temporal, historical facticity" is analogous to Balthasar's seeing the form, for which see Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 125.

<sup>88</sup> Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 125.

<sup>89</sup> Balthasar, *Glory* 7, 288.

depicts the same dynamic to which Doran refers when he adopts Heidegger's *Verstehen* as an explanatory category.

It would appear that Lonergan makes a reference to meaning of this kind when he speaks of the "symbols that inform [humanity's] being."<sup>90</sup> In these circumstances the perceived form is experienced immediately from above as data of empirical consciousness, even though aspects usually considered to derive from the exercise of intentionality from below are implicit in that form. Doran therefore differentiates reception "from below" and reception "from above":

Reception "from below" has to do with the data of sense and consciousness that are the straightforward object of "empirical consciousness" in the ordinary sense of the term. But reception 'from above' has to do with the meanings and values that are handed on to us in our communities. In each case there is an immediacy about the reception that qualifies it as "empirical consciousness," but in the second case empirical consciousness is also intelligent, judgmental, evaluative. In the movement from above downwards there is an empirical element, an element of immediacy, however mediated the immediacy may be, at the other levels of consciousness.<sup>91</sup>

Granted that empirical consciousness is always experienced as immediate, with Doran's proposal we can now accept that intelligent reflection and evaluation can comprise that immediacy when the data is derived from above.

Doran sources this "above down" movement in "heritage and community."<sup>92</sup> A subject's communal context will provide the prior horizon that will determine the development of any subsequent critical reflection.<sup>93</sup> While the Holy Spirit can directly inspire thoughts and feelings, their meaning will be interpreted according to the culture that has formed us, as writers on mysticism attest.<sup>94</sup> Doran suggests that it is here that "God's entrance into the world of human meaning" occurs.

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<sup>90</sup> Lonergan, "Religious Experience," 115.

<sup>91</sup> Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 125-126.

<sup>92</sup> Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 126.

<sup>93</sup> Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 137.

<sup>94</sup> See for example the Lonergan-inspired reflections of McGinn, *Foundations*; McGinn, "Mystical Consciousness: A Modest Proposal," 44-63.

God's entrance into the world of human meaning is God's effecting transformations in that already given intelligibility of 'world' that is correlative to our horizons – effecting transformations through the cognitive, constitutive, communicative, and effective functions of God's own meaning.<sup>95</sup>

God changes our world-view within our current context. Consequently, the accuracy of a subject's discernment is to a large part affected by the tradition of the community in which he or she has been formed. To the degree that God's revelation has gained entrance into a community, there will be a heightened probability that "graced ordinary meaningfulness" will be available to subjects.<sup>96</sup> The minor authenticity of the subject will then be able to unfold all the more assuredly in the context of the major authenticity of his or her community.<sup>97</sup> I suggest, however, that when such authentic unfolding has difficulty occurring, awareness of the organic dimension of psychic conversion will serve the individual in his or her efforts to discern an authentic and life-giving course of action. I turn now to consider Doran's reflections on this further, organic expansion of the conversion he proposes.

For the Christian the self derives from two major sources, both of which constitute the *imago Dei*. The first source is that of self-transcending intentional consciousness, which comprises cognitional processes, judgements of value and acts of love. The second is the body, which is also subject to transformation through participation in the divine nature. Doran observes that such participation is registered at both sensitive and imaginal levels when the psyche is participating in the realm of transcendence and has become, by the grace of God, "a sensorium of transcendence."<sup>98</sup> Doran emphasises the importance of this incarnational perspective, thereby supporting Jung's critique of the lack of embodiment in Christian life. A focus on the organic dimension is important for the Christian who seeks to grow in the image of Jesus Christ, God incarnate.

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<sup>95</sup> Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 137. For an explanation of these different functions of meaning, see Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 76-81.

<sup>96</sup> Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 139.

<sup>97</sup> For Lonergan's reflections on major and minor authenticities, see Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 80.

<sup>98</sup> Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 345.

With these considerations on the value of the body, it is apparent that Doran could have focused on the organic rather than the hermeneutical expansion of psychic conversion. In other words, he could have chosen to focus on the point at which neurophysiological processes emerge into felt sensation and psyche. Nevertheless, he does make some observations in this regard. Doran considers that Lonergan's dramatic bias and scotosis have an organic component to them. Max Scheler speaks of this sort of thing when he refers to the "organic mendacity" that lies deeper than conscious efforts to lie or falsify:

Here the falsification is not formed in consciousness but at the same stage of the mental process as the impressions and value feelings themselves: on the road of experience into consciousness.<sup>99</sup>

Inauthentic and, indeed, immoral, behaviour can occur *en route* to consciousness. It is for this reason that Doran stresses the importance of awareness of the "tidal movement" that Lonergan has identified.<sup>100</sup> It is a movement that begins before consciousness and unfolds through sensitivity and the subsequent levels of self-transcending intentionality. Doran, with Lonergan, considers that the first expression of that tidal movement occurs in our dreams.<sup>101</sup> Hence, he privileges imagery and symbolism as the primary means for the revelation of these movements. In so doing, however, Doran fails to appreciate that bodily sensation can be a rich source of data in itself, for it is the first expression of the neural demands of the subject. It is here, I suggest, that a comprehensive "organic expansion" of psychic conversion must take place.

We can learn to pay attention to sensations in a more conscious state than dreams and images afford. With a heightened level of awareness we can then exercise an attitude of acceptance. At this stage, we do not need the further step of image-based meaning. Regardless of the nature of one's sensations, an accepting attitude towards them, before the addition of image-based evaluation, can bring about transformation at an organic level. This transformation then impacts on the whole range of psychic expression because our neuro-

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<sup>99</sup> Scheler quoted in Doran, "Reception and Elemental Meaning," 133, 152; Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 139-140. Note that much of the earlier article is reprinted in the later book.

<sup>100</sup> See Lonergan, "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness," 124.

<sup>101</sup> Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 140.

physiologically based embodied state is foundational to us in every respect.<sup>102</sup> Doran is profoundly alert to this issue. He frequently comments on the failure of the organism to meet its neural demands by an authentic praxis that sublates theoretical insight and knowledge.<sup>103</sup> While his proposal to rectify this state is informed by Jung and, in later editions of his work, by Gendlin, Doran does not draw on the literature that addresses body sensations *per se*.

Nevertheless, Doran upholds Lonergan's position that there is an "immanent critique" within the human psyche that can subject an inauthentic tradition to testing.<sup>104</sup> With Lonergan, Doran would insist that "objectivity is the fruit of authentic subjectivity, of being attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible."<sup>105</sup> I would add that individuals seeking authenticity, although hindered by an inauthentic tradition, can learn to pay attention to their body. In contrast to the unfortunate condition depicted by Scheler, namely the "organic mendacity" that means that a subject is not aware that he or she is lying, an individual who learns to be attentive to embodied sensation discovers that the body does not lie.<sup>106</sup> An aware acceptance of the embodied data of consciousness will effect transformation of that data. Hence, attentive receptivity to empirical consciousness, accompanied by intelligent reflection and responsible deliberation can aid authentic development even in the absence of an authentic communal tradition. Such awareness constitutes discernment when

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<sup>102</sup> For a reflection on the nature of attunement from a neurological point of view, see Siegel, "Mindful Awareness, Mindsight, and Neural Integration," 137-138, 143. Note that Siegel proposes that attunement occurs not only interpersonally but intrapersonally, see Siegel, "Mindful Awareness, Mindsight, and Neural Integration," 145-149. For other instances of the literature on the neurological implications of mindful attentiveness to bodily sensation, see Richard J. Davidson et al., "Alterations in Brain and Immune Function Produced by Mindfulness Meditation," *Psychosomatic Medicine* 65 (2003): 564-570; Belinda Ivanovski and Gin S. Malhi, "The Psychological and Neurophysiological Concomitants of Mindfulness Forms of Meditation," *Acta Neuropsychiatrica* 19 (2007): 76-91.

<sup>103</sup> See, for example, Doran, *Psychic Conversion and Theological Foundations*, 122.

<sup>104</sup> Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 142.

<sup>105</sup> Lonergan, "Religious Knowledge," 144.

<sup>106</sup> See Katja Franko Aas, "The Body Does Not Lie: Identity, Risk and Trust in Technoculture," *Crime Media Culture* 2, no. 2 (2006): 143-158. While this paper refers to technical dimensions of the body, I suggest that the same principle applies to the psychological value of neuro-physiologically based embodied data. For a complementary discussion of this issue, see Babette Rothschild, *The Body Remembers* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000).



attentiveness to the embodied expression of the “tidal movement” of consciousness provides direction for one’s life. Doran has reflected on the issue of discernment in the context of his Jesuit tradition and offers interesting parallels between his Jesuit colleague, Lonergan, and their common spiritual father, Ignatius of Loyola.<sup>107</sup>

#### 4. Discernment, Attunement and Rest

Doran conveys the Ignatian ethos in Lonergan’s presentation of *Insight* when he observes that some Jesuit colleagues had found reading the book to be a source of consolation.<sup>108</sup> In particular, he cites Lonergan’s explanation of being as a reason for such consolation, since Lonergan can explain the way in which being reveals the glory of God and thereby creates a greater love for God.<sup>109</sup> Further, the opportunity for self-appropriation that the book affords, and the assured hope derived from knowing that one can struggle for a felt position that yields a confident statement “This is the case,” can generate the consolation of an increase in hope, faith and charity and inflame one’s love for God. Lonergan, like Ignatius, calls for detachment, disinterestedness and indifference. He balances wisdom from the world with a profound love for God. He ensures that, while *Insight* “might appear to be a book that comes from Athens rather than Jerusalem,” only what is worthwhile in Athens is taught.<sup>110</sup>

Even though Doran appreciates the way in which psychic imagery unites spirit and matter, he acknowledges, with Jung, that this union can work for both good and ill.<sup>111</sup> Doran argues:

The only adequate horizon for understanding psychic data seems to demand not only the sublation of depth psychology by intentionality analysis but also the

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<sup>107</sup> For another recognition of a “constructive resonance” between Lonergan and Ignatius, see Gordon A. Rixon, “Transforming Mysticism: Adorning Pathways to Self-transcendence,” *Gregorianum* 85, no. 44 (2004): 719-734.

<sup>108</sup> Robert M. Doran, “Ignatian Themes in the Thought of Bernard Lonergan,” *Toronto Journal of Theology* 22, no. 1 (2006): 40.

<sup>109</sup> Doran, “Ignatian Themes in the Thought of Bernard Lonergan,” 41. For an interesting and comprehensive reflection on Lonergan’s notion of being, see Patrick H. Byrne, “The Goodness of Being in Lonergan’s *Insight*,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 81, no. 1 (2007): 43-72.

<sup>110</sup> Doran, “Ignatian Themes in the Thought of Bernard Lonergan,” 42. Doran implicitly refers to Acts 17:22-31.

<sup>111</sup> Doran, “Christ and the Psyche,” 51.

sublation of both psychology and method by the process of the *discernment of spirits*.<sup>112</sup>

We need the skill of discernment to provide a spiritual complement to authentic living.

Doran reflects on the process of discernment within the context of Lonergan's work:

What the Christian tradition has called discernment is the search for direction in the movement of life. The experience of the movement provides data that, if we know how to interpret them, are indications as to whether or not we are finding or missing the direction.<sup>113</sup>

Doran explains discernment within the context of the experience of the movement of consciousness within us. Not only does Doran call us to be attentive to that data of consciousness, he also urges us to learn how to interpret and understand it. Attending to our dreams, to symbol and imagery were for Doran, at that time, the primary means for discerning such direction. Anagogic symbols in particular are significant for discerning the direction of life's movement.<sup>114</sup> Later, Doran acknowledges that the imaginal work proposed by Eugene Gendlin also serves this goal.<sup>115</sup>

While Doran's early thought was focused on the application of psychological strategies in the service of attentiveness to the data of consciousness, Doran's more recent reflections on discernment provide an interesting application of Lonergan's work. Doran considers *Insight* and *Method in Theology* from the viewpoint of their respective presentations of Lonergan's notion of the good and of decision-making. He then aligns these two means of determining the good with two of the three Ignatian times for discernment and decision-making.<sup>116</sup> Lonergan acknowledges that he had presented two notions of the good in his two books: "In *Insight* the good was the intelligent and reasonable. In *Method in Theology* the good is a

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<sup>112</sup> Doran, "Christ and the Psyche," 137. Emphasis original.

<sup>113</sup> Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 43.

<sup>114</sup> Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 291.

<sup>115</sup> See his 2004 notes, acknowledging the work of Gendlin, throughout Doran, *Psychic Conversion and Theological Foundations*.

<sup>116</sup> See Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 102-107; Doran, "Ignatian Themes in the Thought of Bernard Lonergan," 42-45; Robert M. Doran, "Discernment and Lonergan's Fourth Level of Consciousness," *Gregorianum* 89, no. 4 (2008): 790-802.

distinct notion."<sup>117</sup> Whereas in the former we determine the good through intelligent reflection, in the latter the apprehension of value through feelings determines the good. Doran suggests that these two different accounts parallel two different types of occasions, identified by Ignatius, for making a decision.

As mentioned earlier, Ignatius identifies three times for decision-making. In the first time a person is convinced that a particular choice is God's will. The second and third times require more consideration. In the second time the one seeking to discern is tossed around by different feelings. Discernment occurs when one eventually identifies which considered choice yields peace. This is the situation, Doran argues, that *Method in Theology* depicts, because it emphasises the value of feelings. In the third time there is tranquillity about the decision-making process and an absence of emotional turmoil. Discernment occurs by reflecting on which considered choice is the intelligent and reasonable choice. Doran suggests that the argument presented in *Insight* typifies this situation, because of the emphasis there upon intelligent reflection upon experience.

In both circumstances grace is operative. This is particularly apparent in the second time when decisions occur on the basis of the "self-transcending affectivity . . . that matches the unrestricted reach of the notion of value."<sup>118</sup> Here, the person in love with God seeks to align his or her choice with that love. Yet the process of decision-making in the third time relies also on grace. Since God's grace sustains the natural human processes of intelligent reflection on experience, the activities of this time are not to be dismissed as uninvolved with God's loving direction.<sup>119</sup>

Doran also considers Ignatius' first time for decision-making in the context of his discussion of Ignatius' consolation without previous cause.<sup>120</sup> For Doran the consolation without

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<sup>117</sup> Lonergan, "Insight Revisited," 277. For Doran's references to this quote, see Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 102; Doran, "Ignatian Themes in the Thought of Bernard Lonergan," 42-43; Doran, "Discernment," 790.

<sup>118</sup> Doran, "Ignatian Themes in the Thought of Bernard Lonergan," 45.

<sup>119</sup> Doran, "Ignatian Themes in the Thought of Bernard Lonergan," 45.

<sup>120</sup> Doran, "Ignatian Themes in the Thought of Bernard Lonergan," 48-50; Doran, "Discernment," 800-801.

previous cause that accompanies the Ignatian first time of decision-making occurs through our participation in God:

[I]n the first time, that dynamic state of being in love and its word of value judgment are so dominant that the loving decisions and actions flow spontaneously forth from them in a way that admits no doubt as to where they come from or whose life is being reflected in them: "I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20).<sup>121</sup>

God has so moved the will in this circumstance that there is no doubt about the task required.<sup>122</sup> In Lonergan's terms, there are no further questions to be asked and one has a confident assurance that the considered course of action is the correct one.<sup>123</sup> Doran suggests that the consolation without previous cause accompanies decisions such as these, and he reflects further upon the entire process.<sup>124</sup>

In *Method in Theology* Lonergan refers to "St. Ignatius Loyola's consolation that has no cause" and to Rahner's exposition of the experience.<sup>125</sup> Lonergan observes that for Rahner the consolation has content, yet lacks an object. In this context there is no object towards which intentionality can be directed. It is the experience of the love of God, which is the core of all authentic religious experience, and is also the experience of a "mediated return to immediacy" reached by a mystic.<sup>126</sup> It is an experience of the One who is unable to be known in the way an object in the world can be known, namely through the exercise of intentionality towards truth. Doran asks whether or not the consoling experience without a cause is nonintentional and whether it therefore contrasts with our usual experiences, accompanied as they are by intentionality towards truth or goodness.<sup>127</sup> Lonergan would suggest that this is so. When Lonergan responded to a question concerning the consolation

<sup>121</sup> Doran, "Ignatian Themes in the Thought of Bernard Lonergan," 48.

<sup>122</sup> Fleming, ed., *Spiritual Exercises*, §175.

<sup>123</sup> See Doran, "Discernment," 800.

<sup>124</sup> Doran, "Ignatian Themes in the Thought of Bernard Lonergan," 48-50; Doran, "Discernment," 801.

<sup>125</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 106.

<sup>126</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 29, 77.

<sup>127</sup> Doran, "Ignatian Themes in the Thought of Bernard Lonergan," 49.

without previous cause, he accepted the questioner's proposition that there would be no insight, no concept, and no judgment and observed that the consolation without previous cause was "self-transcendence reaching its summit."<sup>128</sup>

Elsewhere Lonergan discusses nonintentional experiences, but it is in the context of the more "homely affairs" of fatigue and irritability, and so forth.<sup>129</sup> Doran proposes that the consolation without previous cause constitutes a supernatural instance of a nonintentional experience. He insists, however, that to suggest the consolation without previous cause is nonintentional does not mean that it has no direction. On the contrary, it participates in the dynamism of vertical finality and as such is a supernatural example of this movement of intentional consciousness.<sup>130</sup>

Doran considers the experience as an awareness of unconditional love and as accomplishing a "rest." It is "the fulfilment of intentional striving, where all striving ceases and one rests in love."<sup>131</sup> It generates a "rest beyond the levels of intentional consciousness."<sup>132</sup> Doran argues that the moment of nonintentionality is restful because all intentional striving has stopped. Doran suggests that the moment occurs at a fifth level of consciousness. This raises the spectre of a debate that has raged around the issue of how many levels of consciousness there are. I will present this issue as a preparatory foundation for my primary concern to consider the idea of restful, discerning attunement and its pertinence to following confidently one's vocation in a life attuned to God's will.

To propose a rest that occurs beyond the levels of intentional consciousness is to propose a state that transcends the levels of experience, understanding, judgement, and responsible decision-making and action. Hence, Doran proposes a fifth level of consciousness that he

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<sup>128</sup> Tad Dunne, "Being in Love," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 13, no. 2 (1995): 162.

<sup>129</sup> See Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 30.

<sup>130</sup> Doran, "Ignatian Themes in the Thought of Bernard Lonergan," 49.

<sup>131</sup> Robert M. Doran, "Response to Helminiak's 'A Scientific Spirituality: The Interface of Psychology and Theology'," *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 6, no. 1 (1996): 22.

<sup>132</sup> Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 140.

reserves for the “nonintentional reception of the gift of God’s love.”<sup>133</sup> Doran argues that Lonergan added the fifth level when he responded to a question during a seminar. Lonergan said that the dynamic state of being in love without restriction, which is a response to God’s free gift of love, is “on the fifth level.”<sup>134</sup> While Doran chooses to accept the idea of a fifth level of consciousness, others have argued that the experience to which Doran refers is merely the fulfilment of the fourth level of intentional consciousness. Hence, an extended debate about the matter has ensued.<sup>135</sup>

Doran presents Lonergan’s developing thought, arguing that ultimately Lonergan proposed not only five but six levels of consciousness.<sup>136</sup> Doran offers what he considers to be Lonergan’s “most complete statement”:

Our intentionality analysis distinguished the four levels of experience, understanding, factual judgment, and existential decision. We must now advert to the fact that this structure may prove open at both ends.<sup>137</sup>

Importantly, however, the additional two levels refer not to levels associated with intentional activity but to levels of nonintentional consciousness. At the lower level, which begins before consciousness, is a “symbolic operator.”<sup>138</sup> This operator acts at the interstices of lower level “neural potentialities and needs” with the higher level psychic task of generating imagery and affectivity. I would add to Doran’s reflections that, in referring only

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<sup>133</sup> Doran, *Psychic Conversion and Theological Foundations*, 216n231. The note was added to the original edition of this work in 2004.

<sup>134</sup> See Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 112.

<sup>135</sup> See Dadosky, “Healing the Psychological Subject,” 78n15; Doran, “Consciousness and Grace,” 51-75; Robert M. Doran, “Revisiting Consciousness and Grace,” *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 13, no. 2 (1995): 151-159; Doran, “Complacency and Concern and a Basic Thesis on Grace,” 13, 57-78; Dunne, “Being in Love,” 161-175; Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer, “Sanctifying Grace in a “Methodical Theology,”” *Theological Studies* 68, no. 1 (2007): 52-76; Vertin, “Lonergan on Consciousness: Is There a Fifth Level?,” 1-36.

<sup>136</sup> Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 112-116.

<sup>137</sup> Lonergan, “Philosophy and the Religious Phenomenon,” 400. This paper was posthumously published.

<sup>138</sup> For Lonergan’s observation that he is indebted to Robert Doran for the notion of a “symbolic operator,” see Lonergan, “Philosophy and the Religious Phenomenon,” 400n408.

to a symbolic operator effective before consciousness, Lonergan again does not appreciate that he could have observed that a “sensory operator” is commensurately operative.<sup>139</sup>

At the upper end “beyond the moral operator that promotes us from judgments of fact to judgments of value . . . there is a further realm.” Here Lonergan situates interpersonal relations and the consummation of love towards God expressed in a “total commitment” that yields one’s “fullest joy and deepest peace.”<sup>140</sup> Indeed as Doran points out in an earlier study, the issue is not so much one of levels of consciousness but of the centrality of love.<sup>141</sup> When we learn to exercise intentionality, while at the same time resting in the experience of God’s love for us, we have learnt the skill of being attuned to God. I turn now to explore further the idea of rest and the accompanying capacity for ongoing attunement to God’s will, an attunement always accompanied by discernment.

I referred in the previous chapter to the Aristotelian principle of movement and rest that characterises human nature. Lonergan grounded Aristotle’s principle in the dynamic of human consciousness. I pointed to the way in which the exigence for intelligent and reflective attentiveness to human consciousness then generated questions for deliberation. The exigence for self-transcendence finds fulfilment through the exercise of choices and deeds, and ultimately yields rest. Yet there is a deeper, more encompassing degree of rest that can be experienced when actions are undertaken in response to the gift of God’s love, a gift which carries with it an imperative for responsible action. Scripture talks of this rest: “we who have believed enter that rest” (Heb 4:3). Such is the case for one who has attentively, intelligently and reasonably discerned God’s call to mission and, through love for God, has responded responsibly. I suggest that this dynamic engages all six of the levels to which Lonergan and Doran refer. Certainly only four access intentional objects. Yet the

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<sup>139</sup> Note that the “operator” is that which brings about its associated operations, and hence is merely a heuristic explanatory device. The operations associated with a symbolic operator would be those of forwarding imagery and symbol for consideration. My proposed sensory operator would forward sensations *per se* for consideration.

<sup>140</sup> Lonergan, “Philosophy and the Religious Phenomenon,” 400. Lonergan notes that the consideration of the extra two levels is particularly pertinent not only to a study of the Christian religion but also to other religions, for which see Lonergan, “Philosophy and the Religious Phenomenon,” 400-401.

<sup>141</sup> Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 31.

underpinning passionateness of being and the overarching dimension of surrender to God in love that consummates the whole encompass those four.

The “rest” to which Lonergan and Doran refer affects the body. Lonergan observes that faith, hope and love penetrate to the “sensitive level.”<sup>142</sup> Doran considers that biological and psychic changes follow upon the transformation effected in a person’s conscious knowing and willing by unitive prayer.<sup>143</sup> The burgeoning field of “neurotheological” studies supports Doran’s observation, because it demonstrates a link between mystical experience and the neurological functioning that accompanies not only psychic and somatic activity but also spiritual activity.<sup>144</sup> Within the Christian tradition contemplative prayer is an essential component for developing this rest and for learning the felt-sense of resting in God.

Such rest enables growth in the capacity to be attuned to God. Doran does not explicitly define the term, even though he refers to “attunement” in much of his writing and particularly links it with discernment.<sup>145</sup> Essentially, it would appear that attunement is the culminating moment of the self-transcending movement of intentional consciousness from below, integrated with the graced dynamic of God’s love moving into consciousness from above.<sup>146</sup> Such would be the cognitive meaning of attunement. Doran, however, insists that constitutive meaning has foremost value. His concern is with the transformation of the

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<sup>142</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 546, 723.

<sup>143</sup> See Rixon, “Bernard Lonergan and Mysticism,” 486.

<sup>144</sup> See Davidson et al., “Alterations in Brain and Immune Function Produced by Mindfulness Meditation,” 564-570. For a presentation of the biological and chemical foundations of consciousness, see Candace B. Pert, *Molecules of Emotion* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997). For an interesting study of the neurological functioning of Tibetan Buddhists and Franciscan nuns, see Andrew Newberg, Eugene D’Aquili, and Vince Rause, *Why God Won’t Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2002). For their proposal of a neurotheological approach to the study of religious experience, see especially, Newberg, D’Aquili, and Rause, *Why God Won’t Go Away*, 173-179. I suggest that this area is a fruitful field for future research.

<sup>145</sup> See especially Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*. Although I found 25 references to “attunement,” the term is not indexed.

<sup>146</sup> See Meredith Secomb, “Hans Urs Von Balthasar’s Notion of “Christian Attunement:” A Study Illuminated by Lonerganian Intentionality Analysis” (Master’s Thesis, Melbourne College of Divinity, 2006), 60-61. Note that for Balthasar, for whom the notion of attunement is also important, it is beauty that elicits the movement from below. For Balthasar’s discussion of attunement, see especially Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 241-257. For the original German see the section *Christliche Einstimmung*, Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit I*, 233-247.



subject through engagement with God. An attuned moment of encounter with God is transformative, reconstituting one's self-experience and self-understanding and affecting one's Christian praxis. It is in his discussion of discernment that this meaning most clearly emerges.

Doran explores discernment within the context of world history.<sup>147</sup> He considers the way in which the breakthrough from a cosmological to an anthropological emphasis (and in the Christian tradition to a soteriological component) meant also a breakthrough in the way in which societal order was determined. The anthropological emphasis meant that order in society derived from order in the soul of the individual, which itself derived from God, the "world-transcendent measure."<sup>148</sup> The task of discernment is to find the situation in which order in the soul aligns with the order of the transcendent. Such alignment is "attunement."

The issue of discernment emerges as the problem of discriminating those inclinations that draw us to attunement with the world-transcendent measure from those that draw us away from such attunement.<sup>149</sup>

Discernment is a "matter of recognizing the movements of the heart and mind by which God draws us to God."<sup>150</sup> It is a matter of aligning immanent order with transcendent order, both of which ultimately derive from grace.

The further soteriological dimension that the revelation of Jesus Christ brings means that the order with which the Christian seeks to be aligned has been enfleshed. Hence, attunement now means embodying that pattern within our own lives, a pattern reliant on the mystery of death and resurrection. Doran follows his Ignatius in directing us to the cross:

To be in attunement with the world-transcendent measure of integrity is to be conformed to the law of the cross. Finding the direction in the movement of life now is a matter of becoming poor with Christ poor, rejected with Christ rejected, humble with Christ humble.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 291-294.

<sup>148</sup> Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 291.

<sup>149</sup> Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 291.

<sup>150</sup> Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 291.

<sup>151</sup> Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 292.

Attunement to God entails for the Christian the radical cost of discipleship. It is understandable, then, that there might arise a further question for the one having sought and found God. It is the question put so pungently by Doran: "Do I want to be in attunement with that?"<sup>152</sup> The philosophic and contemplative search for truth and goodness has led to an unexpected place. It is a place that costs "not less than everything."<sup>153</sup>

While there is a great cost, there is also a great reward. It is the reward of being gifted with that which only God through the Holy Spirit can bring; it is the reward of participation in the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4). This participation manifests through a more confident exercise of the theological virtues, through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, through various charisms (1 Cor 12:4) and through experiences of what the tradition refers to as spiritual senses. Learning to live with a discerning attitude in this place requires the sustained exercise of what Doran refers to as a "taut balance or creative tension of limitation and transcendence."<sup>154</sup> On the one hand, we are aware of our sinful creaturely limitations; on the other hand, we are alert to intimacy with God in Jesus Christ which, while always through faith, is nevertheless present to our consciousness in very real ways.<sup>155</sup> This balance is felt by the sensitive psyche. As such, it has the potential to become a criterion for discernment for the one who has learnt a receptive attentiveness to the embodied psychic dimension of their human functioning.

Attributing due value to the body will assist the effort to learn attentiveness to the embodied dimension of human functioning. Given our dualistic tendency to value the cognitive and affective domains and to devalue the somatic domain, this is sometimes hard to achieve. Postmodern reflection on the body serves us in our endeavour to heighten an appreciation of the significance of the body. I turn in the following, penultimate chapter to a

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<sup>152</sup> Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 293.

<sup>153</sup> Cf. T.S. Eliot, "Little Gidding," in *The Four Quartets* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), §V.

<sup>154</sup> Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 293.

<sup>155</sup> For Balthasar's observation that increasing knowledge should not weaken, but rather strengthen faith, see Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 133.

more focused consideration of the body and its receptivity to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are a necessary component for discerning God's call to a vocation.

## 5. Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has drawn on Robert Doran to provide a bridge between the work of Hans Urs von Balthasar and Bernard Lonergan. Given that some question whether conversation between Balthasar and Lonergan is possible, I looked first at their complementarity and challenged those who might dispute the possibility of engaging them both in conversation.

Doran's notion of psychic conversion served to demonstrate a means of mediating between the organic and spiritual dimensions of our human functioning. His emphasis, however, is merely upon the importance of attentiveness to symbol and imagery, rather than the specifically sensate dimensions of human functioning. I suggested that a greater understanding of the significance of these dimensions would accord them a value that they are not usually given even by those who do attempt to pay attention to their interiority.

Doran expands his original notion of psychic conversion to include a hermeneutical dimension, which recognises that the dynamic from above down can infuse meaning and value spontaneously in the form of empirical dimensions of consciousness. While Doran also proposes an organic expansion in the context, he does not elaborate upon it. I suggested that this expansion has great potential. It points to the value of attentiveness to the sensory data of embodied consciousness and hence serves the possibility of a more comprehensive self-appropriation.

The Ignatian-trained Doran also offers insightful reflections on the relationship between Lonergan's writings and the three times of decision-making that Ignatius distinguishes. This discussion led to a reflection on the state of nonintentional rest that accompanies the process of being attuned to God. Such attunement contributes to the accurate discernment of God's will for our lives. I briefly noted that this state of rest is reported in the context of neurotheological studies on religious experience, which demonstrate a link between mystical experience and brain functioning. My emphasis, however, is on the way in which rest in God, and the attunement to God's will that derives from such rest, is accompanied by

the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the experiences of the spiritual senses which, among other things, manifest as phenomena of embodied consciousness. The next chapter explores these dynamics.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **THE BODY AND ATTENTIVE RECEPTIVITY TO MYSTERY**

In the previous chapter I discussed Doran's proposal that mediation between body and spirit occurs through the phenomenon of psychic conversion and suggested that more value be given to the organic dimension of psychic conversion. I also presented Doran's reflections on Ignatian discernment, as they are informed by Lonergan's two different approaches to the good, as well as his discussion of the consolation without previous cause that accompanies the Ignatian "first time" of decision-making. I then discussed Doran's view that a moment of nonintentional rest occurs when we are attuned to God. I suggested that particular spiritual phenomena accompany such rest, a rest that occurs as the term of identification with Christ's paschal mystery. It is the spiritual phenomena that accompany such rest that are the subject of this chapter.

This chapter explores these phenomena under the following headings:

1. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit and the Spiritual Senses
2. Connaturality Revisited: A Reflection on Affectivity
3. The Ego, the Flesh and Givenness
4. Faith, Love and Transformation
5. The Body, Dread and Religious Experience
6. Summary and Conclusion

#### **1. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit and the Spiritual Senses**

Spiritual phenomena are the consequences for human consciousness of an intimacy with God that derives from surrender to the transformative fires of identification with Christ Crucified and that, through the power of the Holy Spirit, enables Christians to participate in trinitarian life. It is a participation that occurs through faith, hope and love, through diverse

charisms, and through the gifts of the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup> The gifts of the Spirit, in particular that of wisdom, enable an attunement to, or a connaturality with, God. They are essential for attentive receptivity to God in the details of ordinary living. I seek in this section to advance an understanding of both the gifts, which serve our capacity to be attuned to God, and the phenomenon of the spiritual senses, which typically accompany the consolation without previous cause. I draw on the Thomist-informed explanatory category of affectivity to help our understanding of these phenomena.

Scripture prophesied that the one who was to come would not “judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear (Is 11:3). Instead, “The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord” (Is 11:2). The Father, through the Holy Spirit, would infuse into Jesus new capacities. Hence, Jesus’ habit of judging neither by what his eyes saw nor by what his ears heard demonstrates a method of decision-making based upon means other than the data of sense. To what was Jesus attending when he engaged in such judging and decision-making?

Tradition proposes that Jesus was open to, and led by, the “gifts of the Spirit.” Thomas Aquinas drew upon Isaiah 11:2 for his formulation of the gifts.<sup>2</sup> The Thomist scholar, Anthony Kelly, observes that Aquinas also drew upon the Pauline doctrine of the transformed spiritual person.<sup>3</sup> Paul proclaims a new creation established in the power of the Spirit.<sup>4</sup> The transformation infuses a capacity to judge things anew: “The spiritual man judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one” (1 Cor 2:14-15). There was a third influence on Aquinas’ formulation of the gifts. It was the Greek doctrine of “‘enthusiasm,’ ‘divine

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<sup>1</sup> Doran, “Lonergan and Balthasar: Methodological Considerations,” 65. Note that Doran observes that Balthasar’s view of faith as a created participation in God inspired him to include the charisms and gifts of the Holy Spirit, for which see Doran, “Lonergan and Balthasar: Methodological Considerations,” 65n10.

<sup>2</sup> See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, vol. 2 (Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, 2002), I-II, q. 68.

<sup>3</sup> Anthony J. Kelly, “The Gifts of the Spirit: Aquinas and the Modern Context,” *The Thomist* 38, no. 2 (1974): 198. This study has become a classic in the field, being cited by present day scholars. See, for example, Bouchard, “Recovering the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in Moral Theology,” 539-558.

<sup>4</sup> See 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15.

possession' or divine '*instinctus*'.<sup>5</sup> Kelly notes that Phillip the Chancellor and St. Albert prepared the way for Thomas to develop a theology of the gifts that conceived the Holy Spirit not only as facilitating and perfecting the virtues but also as providing the "principles of a higher mode of activity."<sup>6</sup>

Writing in the first part of the 17th century, John of St. Thomas, a Dominican, provided not only a scholarly but also a devout study of Thomas Aquinas. He brought "clarity and precision" to Thomas' presentation of the gifts.<sup>7</sup> Theologians reflecting on the gifts frequently refer to John's well-known image, which depicts the natural life of virtue as the demanding task of the rower and the supernatural life of grace as the surrendered life of the sailor. John notes that "great labour" is required when we proceed by our "own power and industry."<sup>8</sup> In contrast "when the Spirit fills the soul interiorly . . . then without labour and in a new-found freedom of the heart the soul moves rapidly like a sail filled with a breeze."<sup>9</sup> While abandonment to the leading of the Holy Spirit issues in freedom and ease in the accomplishment of a task, even the authentic exercise of intentionality towards truth and value is experienced as relatively laborious when done without the help of the Holy Spirit. John first discusses the Thomist presentation of the gifts in general. He then treats the gifts of wisdom, knowledge, understanding, counsel, piety, fortitude and fear. The most important gift, mentioned first by Isaiah, is wisdom, which arises from a "loving connaturality to the things of God . . . a feel for the divine mysteries that comes from the judgment of love."<sup>10</sup> We turn now to consider this gift of the Holy Spirit and the role that charity plays in its functioning, drawing for our considerations upon St. Thomas Aquinas.

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<sup>5</sup> Kelly, "The Gifts of the Spirit," 198.

<sup>6</sup> Kelly, "The Gifts of the Spirit," 198.

<sup>7</sup> See Bouchard, "Recovering the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in Moral Theology," 539. Bouchard cites John of St. Thomas, *The Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1951). For another classic reflection see Joseph a Spiritu Sancto O.C.D., "The Seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost in Early Greek Theology," *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* 26, no. 8 and 9 (1926): 930-938.

<sup>8</sup> John of St. Thomas, *The Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, 56.

<sup>9</sup> John of St. Thomas, *The Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, 56.

<sup>10</sup> For Aquinas' discussion of the significance of the order of the gifts, see Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 2-2, q. 68, a. 67; Kelly, "The Gifts of the Spirit," 203. For Thomas' treatment of wisdom, see Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 2-2, q. 45.

Thomas clearly distinguishes between wisdom as a natural intellectual virtue and wisdom as a gift:

[I]t belongs to the wisdom that is an intellectual virtue to pronounce right judgment about Divine things after reason has made its inquiry, but it belongs to wisdom as a gift of the Holy Ghost to judge aright about them on account of connaturality with them . . . Now this sympathy or connaturality for Divine things is the result of charity, which unites us to God, according to 1 Cor. 6:17: "He who is joined to the Lord, is one spirit." Consequently wisdom which is a gift, has its cause in the will, which cause is charity, but it has its essence in the intellect, whose act is to judge aright.<sup>11</sup>

I have presented this lengthy quotation from Thomas because it puts before us the concern I am addressing here, namely an explanatory account of the "sympathy or connaturality for Divine things" that accompanies the exercise of charity. It is this dynamic that most enables us to discern God's will in ordinary living, for wisdom is not only speculative but practical.<sup>12</sup> As Thomas observes, wisdom, "since it attains to God more intimately by a kind of union of the soul with Him . . . is able to direct us not only in contemplation but also in action."<sup>13</sup> It establishes a "divine instinct" within us that "attunes" us to God.<sup>14</sup> Aquinas terms this instinct or attunement "connaturality." The dynamic of connaturality is not identical with charity.<sup>15</sup> Rather, connaturality is dependent on God-infused charity, which transforms all dimensions of our existence.<sup>16</sup>

Yet how does all this occur? We began this section with the hope that articulating the different ways in which God infuses the Spirit into us would offer a more comprehensive

<sup>11</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 2-2, q.45, a. 42.

<sup>12</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 2-2, q. 45, a.43.

<sup>13</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 2-2, q. 45, a.43.

<sup>14</sup> Kelly, "The Gifts of the Spirit," 197. Kelly uses the term "attunement" and its variations through much of his writing. For an example of this see Kelly, "The Gifts of the Spirit," 193-231.

<sup>15</sup> O'Meara cites Aquinas' *De Veritate* q. 27, a. 2 in support of this position, for which see Thomas F. O'Meara, "Virtues in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas," *Theological Studies* 58 (1997): 264. See also Anthony J. Kelly, "A Trinitarian Moral Theology," *Studia Moralia* 39 (2001): 248.

<sup>16</sup> Kelly, "The Gifts of the Spirit," 197.



understanding of how this new principle for living functions in the context of discerning God's call to a vocation. While we now have a more nuanced description of the Holy Spirit's functioning within us, we still do not have an explanation of how the different gifts transform us.<sup>17</sup> We turn now to the work of Bernard Lonergan and continue to draw on Anthony Kelly's analysis of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

For Thomas the psyche comprises the faculties of intellect and will. Kelly appreciates Thomas' contribution and observes, "It remains Thomas' permanent achievement to have expressed in metaphysical terms his hope for humanity transformed by the Spirit."<sup>18</sup> Kelly succinctly summarises the movement from the Thomist faculty psychology to the kind of intentionality analysis proposed by Bernard Lonergan.<sup>19</sup> Thomas' approach to the gifts is through an "elaborate metaphysical categorization," founded on a faculty psychology.<sup>20</sup> Bernard Lonergan, however, offers an alternative approach based on the concrete, existential subject attending to the data of his or her own consciousness as he or she exercises the intentionality of faith, hope and love towards God.<sup>21</sup> An account of connaturality, using categories drawn from intentionality analysis, will differ from the common sense terms of symbol and affect—for example, those of light, fire and fountain—that frequently typify descriptions of the impact of the Holy Spirit on people's lives.<sup>22</sup>

Thomas proposes a largely theoretical account based on a metaphysically structured psychology, although Kelly acknowledges that Thomas was to some extent appreciative of psychological dynamics in the devout person.<sup>23</sup> Yet when Thomas describes grace as an "entitative habit infused into the soul," such an account draws upon a "whole system of

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<sup>17</sup> For the distinction between a descriptive and explanatory account, see Lonergan, *Insight*, 291.

<sup>18</sup> Kelly, "The Gifts of the Spirit," 213.

<sup>19</sup> Kelly, "The Gifts of the Spirit," 207-213.

<sup>20</sup> Kelly, "The Gifts of the Spirit," 207.

<sup>21</sup> See Lonergan, *Method in Theology*; Lonergan, "Mediation of Christ in Prayer."; Bernard J. F. Lonergan, "Analysis of Faith," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 20, no. 2 (2002).

<sup>22</sup> Kelly, "The Gifts of the Spirit," 208.

<sup>23</sup> Kelly, "The Gifts of the Spirit," 212.

virtues and Gifts” and in effect relies on abstract theoretical propositions.<sup>24</sup> In contrast, as I noted earlier, Lonergan proposed an account of human consciousness and its engagement with God in terms of intentionality.<sup>25</sup> Relevant in this context is the notion of “being-in-love with a transcendent personal mystery.”<sup>26</sup> For Lonergan “being-in-love” was the final term of a transcending movement of intentionality from below and receptivity to God’s graced action from above. There is nothing abstractly theoretical about this; the experienced love of God is very real.

Kelly emphasises the need to attend to the experience of God’s loving involvement in our lives. This will occur when our knowing and willing becomes docile to the movement of the Spirit.<sup>27</sup> Given that the gifts of the Spirit assist this process, a more adequate understanding of those gifts may further the goal of docility to the Spirit. Kelly suggests that we can account for the gifts in terms of intentionality analysis.<sup>28</sup> He considers that progress is possible if we appreciate the phenomenality of the intuitive and affective dimensions present in “personal and interpersonal aspects of knowledge.”<sup>29</sup>

Kelly links his understanding of the gifts with the various faculties:

[It is] the new quality of consciousness that comes about when man enters definitively into the horizon determined by Infinite Love, existentially appreciated as the real space of his living. Thereafter all his activities of experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding have a new modality: he experiences an integration, a simplicity, a fuller freedom as the former ambiguities of his religious existence are left behind. He yields himself now totally to God who is practically appreciated as the “regula” of his activity.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Kelly, “The Gifts of the Spirit,” 308.

<sup>25</sup> See especially Lonergan, *Insight*. For a succinct statement of Lonergan’s position, see Lonergan, “The Subject,” 69-86.

<sup>26</sup> Kelly, “The Gifts of the Spirit,” 209.

<sup>27</sup> Kelly, “The Gifts of the Spirit,” 211.

<sup>28</sup> Kelly, “The Gifts of the Spirit,” 211-213.

<sup>29</sup> Kelly, “The Gifts of the Spirit,” 212.

<sup>30</sup> Kelly, “The Gifts of the Spirit,” 212.

Kelly appeals to our conscious experience for his explanation. He, like Balthasar and Lonergan, points to the experience of unity, simplicity and freedom as the gracious love of God brings increasing integration and transformation to a person's self-experience. He points also to the increasing abandonment enabled by this new freedom. Certainly this is more explanatory than the faculty psychology that Thomas offers us. Yet can we go further?

It could be argued that the account of our entering "definitively into the horizon determined by Infinite Love, existentially appreciated as the real space" of our living is still insufficiently explanatory.<sup>31</sup> What does it mean to "enter in" to this horizon? Moreover, spatial terms such as "horizon" and "space" are still quite descriptive.<sup>32</sup> Can we ground the impact of God's grace on consciousness in a yet more explanatory fashion? Are there categories available that can better help us articulate what is occurring when graced people respond to the movement of the Holy Spirit within their lives?

I propose that the answer lies within a fuller analysis of the experience of grace. Experience is the foundation for all understanding, judging, deciding and acting. Regardless of whether the experience derives from a graced extra-mundane infusion from above or from the normal intra-mundane occurrence from below, it is still subject to the transcendental precept, "Be attentive." Hence, a better understanding of that to which we attend in the experience of grace will heighten our awareness of the impact of grace upon us, and thereby aid us in cooperating with grace. The saints attended to grace in their lives. They referred to that which they experienced as the "spiritual senses." An understanding of their experiences will further our investigation.

The saints were keenly aware of and attentive to the experience of grace and frequently describe it in moving terms. Let us hear Augustine:

But what do I love when I love my God? Not the material beauty or beauty of a temporal order; not the brilliance of earthly light, so welcome to our eyes; not the sweet melody of harmony and song; not the fragrance of flowers, perfumes, and

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<sup>31</sup> Kelly, "The Gifts of the Spirit," 212.

<sup>32</sup> For Kelly's reflection on Lonergan's predilection to resort to spatial terms, see Anthony J. Kelly, "Is Lonergan's *Method* Adequate to Christian Mystery?," *The Thomist* 39, no. 3 (1975): 469-470.

spices; not manna or honey; not limbs such as the body delights to embrace. It is not these that I love when I love my God. And yet, when I love him, it is true that I love a light of a certain kind, a voice, a perfume, a food, an embrace; but they are of the kind that I love in my inner self when my soul is bathed in light that is not bound by space; when it listens to sound that never dies away; when it breathes fragrance that is not borne away on the wind; when it tastes food that is never consumed by the eating; when it clings to an embrace from which it is not severed by fulfilment of desire. This is what I love when I love my God.<sup>33</sup>

Augustine drew on his five senses to describe his experience of the love of God in his “inner self.” Sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch – all are included in his inner experience of light and sound and fragrance and food and embrace. Interestingly Augustine combines touch and sight when he speaks of being “bathed in light.” Mystics frequently combine sensory modalities in their attempts to articulate spiritual experience. St. John of the Cross, for example, draws on sight and touch when he describes his guide as a “light . . . that burned in his heart.”<sup>34</sup> Later in his journey John refers to the sense of hearing in his paradoxical description of his “Beloved” as “Silent music, Sounding solitude.”<sup>35</sup> References to the spiritual senses occur throughout scripture. The spiritual senses of sight and taste are present in the scriptural injunctions to “taste and see that the Lord is good” (Ps 34:8) and to discover that “the ordinances of the Lord are sweeter than honey” (Ps 19:10). The sense of touch is present in the metaphor, “you anoint my head with oil” (Ps 23:5). Jeremiah felt a “burning fire” in his bones (Jer 20:9).

In an introduction to the concept of infused recollection Teresa of Avila tries to distinguish the “spiritual delights” (*gustos*) that the Lord gives in such prayer from the consolations (*contentos*) that our own meditative works effect.<sup>36</sup> In effect, she is distinguishing consolations that derive from no perceived cause other than God from those that derive from her own efforts.<sup>37</sup> She reflects on what the soul perceives:

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<sup>33</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, §10.16.

<sup>34</sup> John of the Cross, “The Ascent of Mt. Carmel,” 69.

<sup>35</sup> St. John of the Cross, “The Spiritual Canticle,” in *The Collected Works of St John of the Cross*, ed. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1979), 412.

<sup>36</sup> Teresa of Avila, “The Interior Castle,” §4.1.1, 487n481.

<sup>37</sup> Note the similarity between the Teresian “spiritual delights” (*gustos*) and the Ignatian “consolation without previous cause” (*consolación sin causa precedente*).

It perceives a fragrance . . . as though there were in that interior depth a brazier giving off sweet-smelling perfumes. . . . no heat is felt, nor is there the scent of any perfume, for the experience is more delicate than an experience of these things.<sup>38</sup>

For Teresa, as for Augustine, the experience is paradoxical. There is warmth, yet no heat is felt; there is fragrance, but no scent. The experience is too delicate to be accounted for by our mundane sensory modalities. Nevertheless, regardless of the source of the experience, the subject must attend to data generated in the psyche by that source. My question concerns how such attentiveness occurs. What exactly is the subject attending to when it is a “spiritual” sense that is the primary experience?

Hans Urs von Balthasar reflects on the exercise of the spiritual senses. For Balthasar the question of the spiritual senses is the culmination of his study of the subjective dimension of revelation.<sup>39</sup> For me it is the culmination of my study of the role of attentiveness in discernment.<sup>40</sup> The question of the spiritual senses arises for Balthasar because we perceive revelation only through faith. Yet in Christ that revelation had a human, sensory manifestation.<sup>41</sup> To the degree that we are in Christ, our bodily senses must be able to accommodate spiritual perception. It must be possible for our normal sense perception to be transformed such that resurrection belief is sustainable.<sup>42</sup> Though we are sensory people,

<sup>38</sup> Teresa of Avila, “The Interior Castle,” §4.2.6. Charles Wesley similarly drew on the spiritual senses when he described his conversion as, “my heart was strangely warmed,” for which see Britannica, *John Wesley*, ed. Dale H. Hoiberg, (CD-Rom, 2001).

<sup>39</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 365. For the argument that the spiritual senses tradition is the “hermeneutical key to Balthasar’s understanding of the relationship between the natural and the supernatural,” see Mark McNroy, “The ‘Spiritual Senses,’ Natural, and Supernatural in Balthasar’s Theological Aesthetics,” (2005), <http://www.aarmysticism.org/documents/McNroy.pdf> (accessed 21 November, 2007).

<sup>40</sup> The limits of this study do not permit a comprehensive study of the spiritual senses, for which see, for example, Stephen Fields, “Balthasar and Rahner on the Spiritual Senses,” *Theological Studies* 57, no. 2 (1996); McNroy, “The ‘Spiritual Senses,’ Natural, and Supernatural in Balthasar’s Theological Aesthetics.”; Karl Rahner, “The Doctrine of the ‘Spiritual Senses’ in the Middle Ages,” in *Theological investigations: Experience of the Spirit: Source of Theology* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1979); Karl Rahner, “The ‘Spiritual Senses’ According to Origen,” in *Theological Investigations: Experience of the Spirit: Source of Theology* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1979); Adolphe Tanquerey, *The Spiritual Life: A Treatise on Ascetical and Mystical Theology* (Tournai: Society of St. John the Evangelist, 1950).

<sup>41</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 365.

<sup>42</sup> See Sarah Coakley, “‘Not with the Eye Only’: The Resurrection Epistemology and Gender,” *Reflections* 5 (2001): 30-35.

we are called to be attentive to and to discern seemingly non-sensory data. How can we explain this phenomenon?

The mystical tradition applies the term “spiritual senses” to descriptions of spiritual experiences that are analogous to physical experiences. Origen (c.185-255) is recognised as the first to use the term.<sup>43</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, Bernard of Clairvaux, Bonaventure, and Ignatius of Loyola all contributed to the tradition.<sup>44</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar refers also to Cyprian, Macarius, Diadochus and Augustine.<sup>45</sup> Sheldrake considers that Origen’s usage was dualist.<sup>46</sup> Balthasar, on the other hand, while acknowledging that Origen “clothes his concepts” in Platonic and dualist ways, rejects any such notion.<sup>47</sup> Origen’s purported dualism, Balthasar argues, was that of Paul who distinguished between the “fleshly and pneumatic man.”<sup>48</sup>

Drawing on the contribution of Bernard of Clairvaux, Hans Urs von Balthasar tries to articulate the nature of the spiritual senses. He explains that a “new sensorium is infused into the natural sensorium and yet is not one with it.”<sup>49</sup> It is our own, yet only as gift. It is a consciousness into which we must be gradually initiated through the alternation of consolation and desolation, and becoming “unserved” (*entselbsteter*) is a foundational dimension for this occurrence.<sup>50</sup> We must develop the capacity for a “passive readiness to participate in the Holy Spirit’s own manner of feeling,” which eventually effects a

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<sup>43</sup> For an excellent presentation of Origen’s position, see Rahner, “The ‘Spiritual Senses’ According to Origen,” 81-103.

<sup>44</sup> Philip Sheldrake, “Senses, Spiritual,” in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 572.

<sup>45</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 249.

<sup>46</sup> Sheldrake, “Senses, Spiritual,” 573. Note that Rahner’s reading of Origen would tend to support this view, for which see Rahner, “The ‘Spiritual Senses’ According to Origen,” 88.

<sup>47</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 370; Balthasar, *Presence and Thought*, 63.

<sup>48</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 370.

<sup>49</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 249.

<sup>50</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 249. For the original German in this and all subsequent quotations, see Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit I*.

“transformation of feeling” (*Hindurchfühlen*).<sup>51</sup> Balthasar argues that this occurs in the “very centre of the person” (*in den zentral-personalen*).<sup>52</sup> Ultimately, through a process of consolation and desolation, our “entire sensitivity” comes to participate in God’s own experience of Godself.<sup>53</sup>

Balthasar reviews the contributions not only of Origen, the medieval theologians and Ignatius of Loyola, but also of more recent thinkers: Karl Barth, Romano Guardini, Gustav Siewerth and Paul Claudel. He concurs with the conclusions of these latter-day thinkers. We are to conceive of the human person as a “sensory-spiritual totality” in which there is a “common centre in which the living person stands in a relationship of contact and interchange with the real, living God.”<sup>54</sup> Certainly such a union of sense and spirit is paradoxical.<sup>55</sup> How the union occurs is a mystery. In trying to understand it, Balthasar reflects on the dialectical dynamics experienced by one journeying towards intimacy with God. He insists that there must be a preliminary apophaticism before we discover the kataphatic experience of body and spirit.<sup>56</sup> This apophatic stage requires a letting go of our usual modes of understanding and the exercise of “naked faith” prior to the transformation of our senses, a transformation that enables us to perceive the inflow of grace.<sup>57</sup> Following Pseudo-Macarius, Balthasar points out that the “profane” senses become spiritual.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, for St. Ignatius of Loyola devout bodily senses can, with training in “conscious and active self-attunement” (*bewusste und aktive Sich-Einstimmen*), come to resemble the

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<sup>51</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 250.

<sup>52</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 250.

<sup>53</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 249. For other references to the process of consolation and desolation and the changes it effects within us, see Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 249, 253, 264, 274, 298, 412, 418.

<sup>54</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 367-405. Balthasar draws on Rahner’s contributions, for which see Rahner, “The Doctrine of the ‘Spiritual Senses’ in the Middle Ages,” 104-134.

<sup>55</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 366. For a reflection on the dialectic of spirit and sense in Balthasar, see Fields, “Balthasar and Rahner on the Spiritual Senses,” 224-241.

<sup>56</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 366, 418. Note that Rahner insists that grace and the practice of prayer are essential for the development of the spiritual senses, for which see Rahner, “The ‘Spiritual Senses’ According to Origen,” 87.

<sup>57</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 366.

<sup>58</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 365.

sensibilities of Jesus and Mary.<sup>59</sup> There still remains for us, however, Balthasar's question of what the spiritual senses "actually are" (*was sie denn nun eigentlich sind*).<sup>60</sup> While Balthasar is helpful in many respects, he does not satisfy our search for an explanatory account of what is occurring in consciousness under the impact of grace and the ensuing experience of the spiritual senses. The following section seeks a distinctly explanatory account with the use of the category of affectivity. Here we turn once again to the work of Thomas Aquinas and his present-day interpreters in our search for a more highly nuanced, explanatory account of the decision-making that occurs under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

## 2. Connaturality Revisited: A Reflection on Affectivity

The term "spiritual senses" continues to be useful. Philip Sheldrake, for example, observes that the very expression points towards the integration of spiritual and sensory experience and that it counters any tendency towards an overemphasis on a too disembodied cerebral concept of 'union' with God.<sup>61</sup> Perhaps most importantly the term highlights the fact that increasing intimacy with God involves the whole person.<sup>62</sup> The experience of the "spiritual senses" is an experience of integration of spirit and body, an experience of the whole self. We cannot dismiss the term merely as metaphor and as an imaginative rendering of a spiritual experience, as Rahner suggests.<sup>63</sup> Something is happening at both a bodily and spiritual level that is akin to a highly refined form of affectivity. Hence reflection on our awareness of affectivity may assist us in our quest to understand what is happening at the bodily and spiritual level in the exercise of both the spiritual gifts and senses in discernment. Let us look once again at Jesus' experience.

Jesus did not judge by what his eyes saw, nor decide by what his ears heard (Is 11:3). If we are, analogously, to judge not by way of our senses but under the influence of the gifts of

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<sup>59</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 375, 378.

<sup>60</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 370.

<sup>61</sup> Sheldrake, "Senses, Spiritual," 573.

<sup>62</sup> Sheldrake, "Senses, Spiritual," 573.

<sup>63</sup> Rahner, "The 'Spiritual Senses' According to Origen," 81.



the Spirit, to what data do we attend? How does decision making occur if it does not derive from the data of visual or auditory modalities, or indeed of any other sensory modality? We have noted Kelly's consideration that connaturality derives from the capacity of love to serve our judgements about divine mysteries.<sup>64</sup> On what is that judgement based? To what experiential data does one attend in order to come to that judgement? Do understanding and judgement occur on the basis of that data?

Thomas Ryan makes a major contribution to our question when, following a Thomist tradition, he argues for the notion of "affective knowing."<sup>65</sup> For Ryan affectivity is an emotional capacity that is embodied in human consciousness.<sup>66</sup> Affective knowing comprises our capacity to make judgements of value on the basis of our emotions. Ryan appreciates the Thomist contribution to our understanding of the gifts of the Spirit and the spiritual senses. Following Aquinas, he argues that it is insufficient to focus on the gifts as the primary construct for affective knowing in the spiritual realm, because Aquinas grounds his concept of the moral life in the transformation of the whole person achieved by the gift of grace.<sup>67</sup> There is a range of considerations pertinent to such a holistic transformation. We cannot consider the gifts in isolation. We need also to consider the distinctions between nature and grace, natural and infused virtue, and also the distinction between the virtues and the gifts. Ryan seeks to bring clarity to the relationship between, and interaction with, these elements of human affectivity.

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<sup>64</sup> Kelly, "The Gifts of the Spirit," 203.

<sup>65</sup> Ryan, "Revisiting Affective Knowledge and Connaturality in Aquinas," 49-68. Ryan draws on the work of Bouchard, "Recovering the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in Moral Theology," 539-558; Daniel C. Maguire, "*Ratio Practica* and the Intellectualistic Fallacy," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 10 (1982): 22-39. Maguire cites John of St. Thomas and the latter's classical work also contributes to Ryan's reflections, for which see Ryan, "Revisiting Affective Knowledge and Connaturality in Aquinas," 51. For the insistence that affective intentionality, as well as cognitional and volitional intentionality, constitute consciousness, see Andrew Tallon, *Head and Heart: Affection, Cognition, Volition as Triune Consciousness* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997); Tallon, "Connaturality."; Andrew Tallon, "Feeling and Faith: the Connatural Attunement of the Believer," (Unpublished paper: 2003).

<sup>66</sup> Ryan, "Revisiting Affective Knowledge and Connaturality in Aquinas," 58.

<sup>67</sup> Ryan, "Revisiting Affective Knowledge and Connaturality in Aquinas," 50n54.

Ryan considers the relationship between knowing and the emotions, connaturality and the affective virtues, and then reflects on the “common ground” in affective cognition, the virtues and the gifts.<sup>68</sup> Ryan here addresses the gifts of the Spirit from the point of view of a mode of connaturality that comprises an attunement to, or a feeling with, God. It is the outcome of being “increasingly sensitized to the divine touch.”<sup>69</sup> Ryan draws on the work of R. J. Snell in his effort to describe such receptivity.<sup>70</sup> Snell proposes that, while connaturality certainly belongs to the affective realm, it cannot be merely identified with a simplistic notion of bodily feelings triggered by external circumstances.<sup>71</sup> Rather, Snell looks to the Heideggerian notion of *Befindlichkeit* or *Stimmung* which denotes “mood or attunement to Being itself.”<sup>72</sup> Snell states that “connaturality . . . is an attunement toward the Divine, a tendency toward, a resonance with, a sympathy or conformity to the Divine.”<sup>73</sup> Ryan points out that Snell’s description refers to the “openness-to-good,” which is the “first ‘moment’ in the structure of an emotion.”<sup>74</sup> There is a foundational receptivity in our emotions, for we are “made to receive the world.”<sup>75</sup> This is the component of empirical consciousness to which Doran also refers in his proposed hermeneutical and organic expansions of psychic conversion.

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<sup>68</sup> Ryan, “Revisiting Affective Knowledge and Connaturality in Aquinas,” 60-65.

<sup>69</sup> Ryan, “Revisiting Affective Knowledge and Connaturality in Aquinas,” 62.

<sup>70</sup> R. J. Snell, “Connaturality in Aquinas: The Ground of Wisdom,” *Quodlibet*, no. 4 (2003), 1-8, [www.Quodlibet.net](http://www.Quodlibet.net) (accessed December 14, 2007).

<sup>71</sup> Ryan, “Revisiting Affective Knowledge and Connaturality in Aquinas,” 62.

<sup>72</sup> Ryan, “Revisiting Affective Knowledge and Connaturality in Aquinas,” 62-63.

<sup>73</sup> Snell, quoted in Ryan, “Revisiting Affective Knowledge and Connaturality in Aquinas,” 63.

<sup>74</sup> Ryan, “Revisiting Affective Knowledge and Connaturality in Aquinas,” 63. Ryan here draws on the work of Vacek, for which see Edward C. Vacek, *Love, Human and Divine: The Heart of Christian Ethics* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1994), 12.

<sup>75</sup> See Ryan, “Revisiting Affective Knowledge and Connaturality in Aquinas,” 53. Ryan here cites Paul J. Waddell, *The Primacy of Love: An Introduction to the Ethics of Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 80. See also the emphasis on receptivity throughout Hans Urs von Balthasar’s corpus.

Ryan then goes on to conclude that such connaturality, understood as being attuned to God, means that we share a nature with God.<sup>76</sup> To have a shared nature with God, Ryan explains, means that our affective intentionality, when oriented towards spiritual values, has an inherent relational dimension.<sup>77</sup> Such a view is, of course, consistent with that of Hans Urs von Balthasar who argues, as we noted in earlier chapters, that we are constituted by relationship.<sup>78</sup> Continuing to draw on Aquinas, Ryan suggests that we must adopt “affective knowledge” as a category that sublates that of the gifts of the Holy Spirit:

The case rests on the consistency in Aquinas’s understanding of, and language for, connaturality as expressed in the magnetic pull toward happiness, in the emotions and their moral significance developmentally, in the affective virtues, and finally in the gifts. Thinking, feeling, willing and acting have a symbiotic and mutually conditioning relationship by which the image of God is established and gradually realized.<sup>79</sup>

Hence, in Ryan’s understanding of interiority the gifts are no longer segregated from the rest of human functioning. They are now part of a seamless whole that occurs as the result of an increasing transformation into, and intimacy with, God. Thus, when we approach the ideal of connatural knowledge and love, we do so with an accompanying integration of the full range of human emotional capacity. Ryan points to recent research on emotional intelligence, which he considers is compatible with the Thomist approach to affective cognition.

It has been said that “The more mature a discipline or branch of science becomes, the more it will begin to unearth common underlying phenomena and properties, which pervade all of nature and transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries.”<sup>80</sup> This has happened in Ryan’s Thomist-informed holistic emphasis, as he has expanded the category of affectivity to embrace the spiritual gifts and senses and also the notion of connaturality. This explanatory account of the phenomena evidenced by those whose behaviour is attuned to God’s will

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<sup>76</sup> Ryan, “Revisiting Affective Knowledge and Connaturality in Aquinas,” 63.

<sup>77</sup> Ryan, “Revisiting Affective Knowledge and Connaturality in Aquinas,” 63.

<sup>78</sup> See especially Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 380-393. Balthasar here acknowledges the influence of Karl Barth.

<sup>79</sup> Ryan, “Revisiting Affective Knowledge and Connaturality in Aquinas,” 68.

<sup>80</sup> Roger N. Walsh, “Emerging Cross-Disciplinary Parallels: Suggestions from the Neurosciences,” *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 11, no. 2 (1979): 175.

facilitates praxis, since it encourages us to learn to be attentive to the affective dimensions of consciousness that accompany the tacit ground of our intentionality and our transformed sensory modalities. The development of such a habit will prepare us to exercise a way of life that is constantly receptive to the leading of grace. Bernard Lonergan refers to such a life as a “mysticism of everyday life.” Hans Urs von Balthasar identifies a similar dynamic in the apostles as they lived with Jesus. Just as they learnt to be obedient to Christ’s teaching in the “details of daily living,” so, through the leading of the Holy Spirit and the habit of attentive receptivity, we can learn similar obedience.<sup>81</sup> As Balthasar observes, Christ’s grace “allows us to direct our lives by the law of his life, and so, by loving contemplation of his life, to bring ours into relation with it, to be transformed in that light, even as to the most ordinary practical decisions.”<sup>82</sup>

The preceding section has provided some explanatory categories grounded in human consciousness for the phenomenon of constant attentiveness to the light of Christ. The next section considers the postmodern contribution, for the postmodernists, influenced by Balthasar, also stress the importance of awareness of phenomena that impinge upon us, gifting us, touching our bodies.<sup>83</sup>

### 3. The Ego, the Flesh and Givenness

For Hans Urs von Balthasar the purification effected passively by God through prayer enables finite freedom to find its fulfilment within infinite freedom. Such passive purification by God is in contradistinction to our active striving towards virtue, for ultimately only God’s grace can purify us; we cannot adequately purify ourselves. Eventually we accept the lesson learnt through the pain of consolation and desolation and locate our deepest source of satisfaction in God rather than in the gifts of God. Infinite freedom can then inscribe instruction internally upon finite freedom; the subject can learn to read the law written on the heart.

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<sup>81</sup> Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life*, 156.

<sup>82</sup> Balthasar, *Prayer*, 107.

<sup>83</sup> Note that some consider Hans Urs von Balthasar to be one of the most significant of postmodern theologians, for which see Hart, *Postmodernism*, 133; Robyn Horner, *Jean-Luc Marion: A Theo-logical Introduction* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), 3-4.

For Balthasar the law of love transcends both the natural law and the written law of scripture. Yet the metaphor of reading “the law written on the heart” cries out for explanation. So far, I have looked to Thomist-influenced scholars to provide categories to account for the phenomenon. A complementary contribution comes from postmodern writers. Jean-Luc Marion and Jean-Louis Chrétien also consider what it is that subjects attend to when they focus on the law of love written on the heart. They direct us to the body and to touch in the context of an exploration of our experience of phenomena that overwhelm us with the fullness of their meaning.

Marion’s approach to the engagement between subject and object contrasts with that of Descartes or Husserl wherein the “I,” through the exercise of intentionality, constitutes the objects with which it engages. As one commentator observes, Marion seeks to go “beyond, or, perhaps more accurately, before, the transcendental I and the empirical me.”<sup>84</sup> In other words, Marion attempts to articulate the experience of a subject who finds herself or himself given only in the act of responding. A brief comment on the meaning of the term “experience” is appropriate before we develop these ideas, since the term “experience” carries a variety of possible meanings. Postmodern accounts of experience distinguish between *Erlebnis*, which is the fruit of a mental process, and *Erfahrung*, which is the lived experience derived from being tested and challenged.<sup>85</sup> The former is central to Husserlian phenomenology, the latter to postmodern reflection. The postmodern focus on experience means that its adherents refer not to a mere “item of experience,” which is readily understood, but rather to that which requires context for its interpretation.<sup>86</sup> Like Balthasar,

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<sup>84</sup> See Robyn Horner, “The Insistent and Unbearable Excess: On Experience (and God) in Marion’s Phenomenology,” *ARC, The Journal of the Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill University* 35, no. 1 (2007): 112. Horner here distinguishes a “transcendental I” and an “empirical me.” The former refers to the subject, passive and subject to the call, and the latter to the subject who is able to reflect on both its own identity and on the phenomenon of calling. I suggest that Carl Jung’s notion of the “Self,” or total personality, is consonant with the former, and his notion of the ego with the latter, for which see Jung, *Aion*, 3-7, 23-35.

<sup>85</sup> Horner, “The Insistent and Unbearable Excess,” 105-106. The German *Erfahrung* is similar to the Dutch word, *ervaren*. For the translation of *ervaren* as “travelling through the country and thus—through exploration—being taken up into the process of learning . . . through direct contact with people and things,” see Kelly and Moloney, *Experiencing God in the Gospel of John*, 25n13. For a discussion of *Erfahrung* in the context of Balthasar’s notion of Christian attunement, see Schindler, *The Dramatic Structure of Truth*, 123.

<sup>86</sup> See Horner, “The Insistent and Unbearable Excess,” 127; Lawrence, “Fragility of Consciousness,” 65.

Marion's focus is on *Erfahrung* in his reflections on the way in which experience informs our sense of self.<sup>87</sup>

Marion also draws on Husserl's distinction between *Körper* and *Leib*, the former referring to a simple physical body and the latter to the more complex notion of "flesh." For Marion our soul or psychosomatic unity is in our flesh.<sup>88</sup> That flesh is essentially passive and receptive. Marion observes that the self-awareness of the ego derives from "an immediate and irrefutable access to itself."<sup>89</sup> It has a feeling of itself.<sup>90</sup> For Marion the body is "gifted with sense."<sup>91</sup> This is an occurrence with implications for the formation of the ego. Before self-reflection occurs at a cognitive level, the sense of self derived from the senses forms the experience of who I am.<sup>92</sup> Yet often there is a significant lack in the felt-sense of integrity of the self. Marion refers in this context to a Balthasarian idea that we have already considered. I referred earlier to Balthasar's observation of a disjunction between our inner experience and our experience of relationship to the world. Marion similarly reflects on this disjunction. He comments on our typical lack of attentive presence to ourselves: "Daily life scarcely gives me access to myself; actually, it dispenses me from having the desire and even the need of it. . . . I traverse my life in a state of separation of body and of thought from myself."<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> See, for example, Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit I*, 211-410.

<sup>88</sup> Marion, *In Excess*, 87.

<sup>89</sup> Marion, *In Excess*, 90.

<sup>90</sup> Marion, *In Excess*, 91. Marion notes that this expression is paradoxical. A more explanatory account drawing on both Lonergan and Carl Jung could be presented in the following terms: confidence of one's existence arises from a correct judgement about the meaning of the experience of endosomatic stimulation.

<sup>91</sup> Marion, *In Excess*, 83.

<sup>92</sup> Marion, *In Excess*, 86-87.

<sup>93</sup> Marion, *In Excess*, 82. For similar reflections taken from the psychological field, see for example Kabat-Zinn, *Coming to Our Senses*; Daniel J. Siegel, "Mindfulness Training and Neural Integration: Differentiation of Distinct Streams of Awareness and the Cultivation of Well-Being," *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience* 2, no. 4 (2007).

Marion here exemplifies the process to which Balthasar refers when he speaks of a mode of living that issues in the “masks of the empirical ‘I’.”<sup>94</sup> Marion identifies the consequences of a lack of attentiveness to one’s physical, mental or emotional processes, namely a state of dissociation between mind and body. He observes that we can go through our lives mechanically, taking no notice of our mental, emotional and physical processes. Marion asks how this plight can be resolved and answers that it is in “taking flesh” that one experiences one’s self and hence “comes back” to one’s self.<sup>95</sup> Hence, for Marion, the resolution to this sad scenario is awareness both of our bodies and of our being “given” to ourselves. This awareness is an essential dimension for successful integration of spiritual realities. Such realities affect our bodies, our minds and our hearts. They impact us from a source seemingly exterior to us and saturate us with their meaning. While our hearts and the capacity to love may indeed sublate the operation of mind and body, the value of bodily awareness cannot be dismissed.

For Marion it is by being present to the felt, corporeal sense of our bodies that we ground ourselves in the reality of the present moment and heal our dissociated condition. This is not some esoteric practice. It is a dynamic integral to our being human for, in contrast to the Cartesian idea that we derive our sense of self from thought, Marion insists that our sense of the body is anterior to thought.<sup>96</sup> Our felt-sense of self derives from an “immediate and irrefutable” access to ourselves.<sup>97</sup> Our flesh “assigns” us to ourselves.<sup>98</sup> We attain our “facticity” and our individuality through our flesh.<sup>99</sup> Through flesh the ego is fixed as an *adonné*, a gifted one. For Marion it is the “pure act of feeling” that determines the certitude

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<sup>94</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 2*, 292.

<sup>95</sup> Marion, *In Excess*, 83.

<sup>96</sup> Marion, *In Excess*, 84.

<sup>97</sup> Marion, *In Excess*, 90.

<sup>98</sup> Marion, *In Excess*, 96.

<sup>99</sup> Marion, *In Excess*, 98.

of the existence of the ego.<sup>100</sup> Marion refers here to the tacit experience of presence to self of which Lonergan speaks.

What are the implications of the postmodern insight for our capacity to be receptive to grace and to the law of love inscribed interiorly on the heart? I suggest that attentiveness to the embodied data to which the postmodernists refer, and subsequent reflection upon its meaning and value, can yield understanding that may issue in an awareness of call. If, however, we are constantly living in a dissociated state of separation of body and self, awareness of these moments will be considerably diminished. Hence, learning attentiveness to the data of consciousness is a value of considerable import to Marion. It is particularly pertinent to attentive responsiveness to the effects of grace in calling one to one's unique vocation. The reception of a vocation may well be experienced in ways that defy everyday categories for understanding one's experience, as Balthasar's transformative experience in the Black Forest exemplifies. Marion proposes the category of saturated phenomena to account for such eventualities.

Marion offers the notion of a phenomenon that so saturates us with meaning that it transcends our normal modes of understanding. He refers to it as a "saturated" phenomenon. Revelation, Marion suggests, is an instance of such, although very ordinary situations also qualify for the term.<sup>101</sup> Anthony Kelly, influenced by both Balthasar and Marion, cites the resurrection as a further instance.<sup>102</sup> Marion also proposes what Tracy has termed the "provocative category of the Impossible."<sup>103</sup> To the mind dominated by linear, rational and conceptualistic limitations, prophetic and mystical forms of awareness disclose impossibility.<sup>104</sup> Such phenomena become instances, then, of the "impossible." The prime

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<sup>100</sup> Marion, *In Excess*, 101.

<sup>101</sup> Marion instances a lecture in a Parisian hall as providing such a plethora of data that it transcends phenomenological analysis, for which see Hart, Introduction to Hart, ed., *Counter-Experiences*, 23.

<sup>102</sup> See Kelly, *The Resurrection Effect*.

<sup>103</sup> David Tracy, "Afterword: A Reflection on *Mystics: Presence and Aporia*," in *Mystics: Presence and Aporia* ed. Michael Kessler and Christian Sheppard (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 242.

<sup>104</sup> Tracy, "Afterword," 242.



instance is the saturated phenomenon of revelation. Invisibility is another characteristic pertinent to revelation.<sup>105</sup> One might ask how the invisible might be given, and yet nevertheless remain invisible. We find the answer not in deficiency, but in excess. As Marion explains, we cannot look at the invisible not because it is deficient but because of its abundant excess that overwhelms our capacities for the normal exercise of intentionality.<sup>106</sup> Our vision is like that which occurs when we emerge from a dark cave into the sunshine; the lack is not in the sun, but in our capacity. Analogous to the sun, the bright splendour that darkens our spiritual vision is a gift given to us. While the experience can be distressing, an awareness of its meaning and value can gentle what is otherwise a painful experience.

For Marion it is love that helps one value such experiences. Marion follows Pascal in recognising three modes of functioning: that of the body, the mind, or the heart.<sup>107</sup> The heart or will includes, but goes beyond, the ways in which the mind and body function. Appropriating apophatic terminology, Marion argues that love provides a knowledge that is a "luminous darkness," the content of which is "known as unknown."<sup>108</sup> Influenced by Pascal, Marion considers cognitive meaning to be of little value, for metaphysics has limited soteriological value.<sup>109</sup> Marion's interest is in constitutive meaning that contributes to forming us and ultimately to saving us. It is the heart that is important for Marion and the heart functions through love and holiness, frequently interrupting the capacity for thought.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> See Marion, "They Recognized Him," 145-152.

<sup>106</sup> See Horner, *Jean-Luc Marion*, 128. Note that this position is consistent with the apophatic mystical tradition for which see, for example, Anonymous, *The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works*; John of the Cross, *The Collected Works of St John of the Cross*.

<sup>107</sup> See Robyn Horner, "The Weight of Love," in *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, ed. Kevin Hart (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 237.

<sup>108</sup> Horner, "The Weight of Love," 238-239. For a reference to "luminous darkness," see Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2006), 80-81.

<sup>109</sup> See Hart, Introduction to Hart, ed., *Counter-Experiences*, 31.

<sup>110</sup> See Horner, "The Weight of Love," 237. For a classical reference to the "ligature" that mystical experience exerts on normal, everyday functioning, see Poulain, *The Graces of Interior Prayer*, 178-190.

Marion is not interested in the pursuit of the cognitive meaning that traditional metaphysics offers. Moreover, Marion's preference is to describe phenomena in their relationship to the human subject, rather than to attempt to explain these phenomena with the aid of terms and the relationships between these terms. If we express his descriptive account in a more explanatory fashion with the intentional categories of consciousness that Bernard Lonergan provides, we can say that the capacity to love sublates the functioning of the body and mind.<sup>111</sup> It offers connatural modes of functioning that transcend cognitive limitations. As such, it is an instance of the primacy of feeling that operates in the context of skilled decision-making.<sup>112</sup> In this context, it is the highly refined affectivity, commensurate with engagement with spiritual realities, which enables the discerning action that is aligned with God's will for us.

Jean-Louis Chrétien is another postmodernist who addresses the interaction of spiritual realities and embodied phenomena in his reflections on our response to a call. He is fully aware of the discontinuity between finitude and the infinite. Yet, drawing on Aristotle and Aquinas, he nevertheless argues that the experience of love opens touch to its fullest possibilities in its passive presence to imageless realities. Purification and prayer are, however, necessary to heighten alertness and receptivity to such realities. Chrétien seeks, in exploring the phenomena of prayer and religious experience, to articulate a phenomenology of the "core experience of human mystery."<sup>113</sup> For Chrétien, and congruent with postmodern thinking, the phenomena of love, the body, the sense of touch and paradox must all contribute to our understanding. Encounter with infinity overwhelms our conceptual capacity. It wounds any egocentric functioning. Consequently, we must draw on apophatic dimensions of the "darkness of touch" in engagement with revelation for our

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<sup>111</sup> I suggest that it is more helpful to speak of a higher order of love that sublates cognitional intentionality than to speak of a higher order of love that "transgresses" the order of the mind, for which see Horner, "The Weight of Love," 237.

<sup>112</sup> See Meredith Secomb, *The Primacy of Feeling in Skilled Decision-Making* (Paper presented at the Australian Lonergan Workshop, Melbourne, 2003). This paper reflected on the work of Andrew Tallon, for which see Tallon, *Head and Heart*.

<sup>113</sup> Anne A. Davenport, Preface to Jean-Louis Chrétien, *The Call and the Response*, trans. Anne A. Davenport (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), x.

accounts.<sup>114</sup> While one could ask whether paradox is an acceptable category for philosophical consideration, the postmodern answer is that only paradox accurately describes the overwhelming experience of encounter with infinity.<sup>115</sup> The body, paradox and dialectic are all dynamics that are pertinent for Maximus the Confessor who influenced Hans Urs von Balthasar, through whom current postmodern thinking has been informed.

The emphases of St. Maximus the Confessor (ca. 580-662) on the dialectic of concealment and revelation, of kataphasis and apophasis, and of Christian asceticism are all pertinent considerations for the perception of divine realities. Maximus argues that, because both sensible and intelligible realities participate in the same universal principle of having been created *ex nihilo* (from nothing), both spiritual and physical dimensions can engage with the infinite. However, since intelligible realities are more similar to the spiritual reality of God, the sensory modalities must be purified to develop a capacity to resonate with spiritual realities. The bodily, and even the spiritual senses, must be transformed.<sup>116</sup>

Hence, for Maximus, as for Balthasar, the capacity for receptivity is commensurate with the subject's spiritual progress in the transformative purification effected by the pursuit of the virtues. Particularly important are the theological virtues of faith, hope and love. Ultimately, however, only God's intervening grace in response to intercessory and contemplative prayer can purify the subject of the "masks" that hide the true "I" from engagement with God. Suffering accompanies this passive purification, as the mystics attest. The programme of purification for which Maximus the Confessor and Hans Urs von Balthasar call effects a transformation not only of our minds but also of our bodies. Just as the transfigured flesh of Jesus Christ at Tabor revealed transcendent realities, so, analogously, can transformed human flesh participate with transformed intellect in the transcendent realm.

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<sup>114</sup> Davenport, Preface to Chrétien, *The Call and the Response*, xvi.

<sup>115</sup> Davenport, Preface to Chrétien, *The Call and the Response*, xvi.

<sup>116</sup> For an excellent discussion of the dynamics of spiritual awareness and the body in Maximus the Confessor, see Adam G. Cooper, *The Body in St. Maximus the Confessor: Holy Flesh, Wholly Deified* (Oxford: University Press, 2005).

For human beings such participation derives from the love of God. Intrinsic to that love is the theological virtue of faith. Consideration of attentive receptivity to the embodied awareness of God must include a discussion of faith. All the theologians I have considered point to the foundational importance of faith. Through the intentionality of faith we reach into the beloved unknown, apprehending transcendent value. Through faith we can cooperate with the call to conversion and allow grace to accomplish a radical decentring within us. Considering that faith and attention share the same dynamics, there is a tacit ground to the intentionality of faith to which subjects can learn to be attentive. Transformed bodily senses with information warranting discernment and reflection now call for our consideration.

#### 4. Faith, Love and Transformation

I am trying to articulate the dynamics of a “transformed consciousness” that is alert to the way in which God leads towards the fulfilment of one’s vocation.<sup>117</sup> Faith is a critical dimension of the experience of being saturated by the Spirit of the risen Christ. The saints, as well as theologians such as Balthasar, the postmodernists and Lonergan, all refer to the importance of faith, albeit in their different ways. While love and faith and hope intertwine in the experience of being saturated by the grace of the trinitarian God, the saints insist that faith is the primary condition for loving intimacy with God. One must believe in God in order to draw near in the love of God (Heb 11:6). Hans Urs von Balthasar insists that there must be a “leap” of faith in order to establish an outworking of mission, and argues that “no theology of mission should fail to attend to this leap.”<sup>118</sup> As Horner observes, “any specification of religious ‘experience’ will have to rely on a risk of faith.”<sup>119</sup> For the postmodernist, Jean-Luc Marion, the saturated phenomenon of God’s presence revealed in Jesus can only be seen through faith.<sup>120</sup> Bernard Lonergan and postmodern considerations contribute a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of faith.

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<sup>117</sup> Kelly, *The Resurrection Effect*, 112.

<sup>118</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 3*, 422.

<sup>119</sup> Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift*, 241.

<sup>120</sup> Horner, “The Insistent and Unbearable Excess,” 128.

Faith stretches forth in attentiveness to the unknown. Our capacity to pursue a “known unknown” is a heuristic structure that enables orientation to the unknown.<sup>121</sup> Lonergan offers an analysis of faith.<sup>122</sup> While recognising the importance of experience, Lonergan points to faith as the fruit of reasonable reflection upon evidence that is amassed from numerous sources: experience, understanding, and belief in the mysteries of faith.<sup>123</sup> He concludes that the act of faith is a good, the latter being derived from an apprehension of future acts dependent on faith.<sup>124</sup> Later reflection led Lonergan to integrate faith and love more fully. Faith became the critical determining factor in fulfilling the exigence for self-transcendence, for “faith is the knowledge born of religious love.”<sup>125</sup> Through faith we apprehend transcendent value.<sup>126</sup> Through the surrender of faith converted subjects allow the transcendent Other to engage them. As the postmodernists speak of it, the dynamic of engagement with this transcendent Other effects a radical “decentering,” a notion to which I will later return. Lonergan explains the apprehension of faith as the “experienced fulfilment of our unrestricted thrust to self-transcendence, in our actuated orientation towards the mystery of love and awe.”<sup>127</sup> Faith apprehends God through an “experienced fulfilment.” What is it that is experienced? In what way is the experience fulfilling? Saracino points towards an answer to these questions. She reflects on our attentiveness or otherwise to the dramatic pattern of our experience in engagement with the Other. Significantly, she notes, “the quality of our engagement with the Other hinges not merely on our experience of the Other, but more importantly, on how we *process* our experience of the Other.”<sup>128</sup> Foundational to an adequate processing of the experience of God, as it is understood by

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<sup>121</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 531ff.

<sup>122</sup> See Lonergan, “Mediation of Christ in Prayer,” 160-182; Lonergan, “Analysis of Faith,” 121-154.

<sup>123</sup> Lonergan, “Analysis of Faith,” 127.

<sup>124</sup> Lonergan, “Analysis of Faith,” 126-128.

<sup>125</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 115.

<sup>126</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 115.

<sup>127</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 115.

<sup>128</sup> Michele Saracino, “Subject for the Other: Lonergan and Levinas on Being Human in Postmodernity,” in *In Deference to the Other: Lonergan and Contemporary Continental Thought*, ed. Jim Kanaris and Mark J. Doorley (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004), 68. The emphasis is mine.

common sense, is the dynamic of faith.<sup>129</sup> I turn now to consider briefly some approaches to understanding how faith operates.

Reflecting postmodern concerns, Hart suggests that we think of faith as that which challenges egocentricity and becomes the ground for our lives.<sup>130</sup> Given that faith is the fruit of a religious conversion, the previously established self-centre will certainly be dislocated and a new ground for functioning will then be established. A further helpful contribution comes from Simone Weil who aligns attention with faith. For Weil the highest exercise of attention is consonant with prayer insofar as it entails both faith (*foi*) and love.<sup>131</sup> This exercise of attention is implicit in the dynamic of self-transcending intentionality so central to Lonergan's conception of the subject. Hart insists that God comes to us "not as experience but in experience: not as that which we can appropriate, render proper to consciousness but rather as a mystery that passes through our lives."<sup>132</sup> Certainly God is a mystery, for we do not experience God per se. Nevertheless, apart from moments of mystical union, a subject who attends to God in faith can learn to be attentive through establishing a dual consciousness both to the tacit ground of that attending and to the accompanying psychic and somatic activity generated by such attentiveness. One such activity is that of expectancy. Smith refers to faith as that which functions as a "horizon of expectation," enabling us to understand circumstances and attribute new meaning.<sup>133</sup> I would suggest, following Robert Doran, that such attentive expectancy will also generate affect and symbol loaded with meanings. Such meanings are not immediately apparent and await further explication. The praying subject can learn to be attentive to the feeling tones of tacit consciousness, to the "subject as subject," in the pursuit of prayerful discernment.

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<sup>129</sup> The postmodern position would argue that from a philosophical point of view we cannot say we experience God in the moment, for each moment of reflection has taken us beyond the moment when God impacted on us. I thank Dr. Robyn Horner for this observation. Nevertheless, from the point of view of the constitutive function of meaning, in the realm of common sense, the subject *experiences* God *as if* it were in the moment.

<sup>130</sup> Kevin Hart, "The Experience of the Kingdom of God," in *The Experience of God: A Postmodern Response*, ed. Kevin Hart and Barbara Wall (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 81, 83.

<sup>131</sup> See Hart, "The Experience of the Kingdom of God," 82.

<sup>132</sup> Hart, "The Experience of the Kingdom of God," 81.

<sup>133</sup> Smith, "Faith," 89.

There is, however, the experience of non-experience that is generally considered to be less readily subject to such analysis. Anthony Kelly describes this phenomenon in the context of the resurrection:

The risen One is no longer seen as once he was. There is a rupture in experience—a void, an emptiness and an ending in the fabric of experience. But it is a void and a death that only Christ can fill. Only he can be the non-experienceable plenitude saturating all possible experience.<sup>134</sup>

Descriptions of the experience of non-experience or of counter-experiences typically draw on images such as “void” or “emptiness.” While such images are associated with the apophatic tradition rather than the kataphatic, they are images nevertheless. As images, they engage psychic activity and hence there will also be somatic ramifications, highly refined though they may be. The term “pneumo-somatic” is appropriate in such a context. Anthony Kelly offers an extended reflection on the transformed consciousness of one saturated by the Spirit of Christ. I turn now to a fuller consideration of his contribution.

To speak of faith merely as attention or expectation does not adequately account for the “knowledge” and assurance that faith can offer. The believer’s experience of spiritual depth and assurance comes from the integration of love with faith. Such integration brings about a renewed sense of self, which requires for its articulation a fuller recognition of the subject in Christ. Citing the biblical injunction to “set your minds on the things that are above” (Col 3:2), Kelly equates “minds” with consciousness. He observes that the renewed consciousness, brought about through seeking the ascended Christ, transforms our sense of identity, reaching deep into our most intimate experience of ourselves.<sup>135</sup> The seeing of Christ that occurred in both the pre-resurrection and resurrection states differs, however, from the seeing that occurs in his ascended state. Kelly, like Balthasar, observes that hearing now becomes the dominant experience rather than sight.<sup>136</sup> Yet all the senses, in an analogical way, contribute to the transformed self-experience in Christ, and “evoke the

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<sup>134</sup> Kelly, *The Resurrection Effect*, 26-27.

<sup>135</sup> Kelly, *The Resurrection Effect*, 111.

<sup>136</sup> Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life*, 393-394.

experience of contact and assurance embedded in a love-guided knowledge.”<sup>137</sup> The tradition of the spiritual senses speaks to this issue.

Kelly cites Aquinas in support of his argument that the spiritual sense of taste, rather than touch, provides our most “intimate form of experience,” for the latter, according to Aquinas, is external to us.<sup>138</sup> Balthasar, on the other hand, draws on Aquinas to argue that touch is the “root of the senses.”<sup>139</sup> I suggest that to consider touch only as extrinsic is to overlook the interoceptive dimension of the sense of touch. With training we can learn to be attentive to the bodily sensations of almost all parts of our body, for nerves are constantly generating sensory data. There is an analogous dimension for the spiritual senses. The loving intention towards God, and attentive receptivity of God’s love towards us, will be accompanied by highly refined interoceptive dimensions that are best referred to in terms of touch. Indeed, even the spiritual sense of taste is of this ilk. Hence, I suggest that alertness to highly refined, deeply interiorised sense of touch, which we can refer to as a pneumo-somatic phenomenon, is of vital importance in heightening one’s awareness of the movement of the Spirit.

Kelly wrestles, as I have, with articulating how the Spirit of Christ affects consciousness and the intentionality of faith. He draws on Balthasar and the tradition of the spiritual senses to address the issue. The emphases on receptivity by both Balthasar and Kelly accord well with Lonergan’s first transcendental precept, “Be Attentive.” We must be prepared to receive that which “spontaneously offers itself,” a suggestion derived from the postmodern emphasis on gift.<sup>140</sup> As we transform an extroverted orientation towards interiority, an

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<sup>137</sup> Kelly, *The Resurrection Effect*, 111-112. Note that Kelly here uses the term “knowledge” to refer to a “comprehensive experience of knowing” that engages all the senses, for which see Kelly, *The Resurrection Effect*, 105. While called an “improper” usage by Fred Lawrence, the latter nevertheless also recognises the value of “performative knowledge,” in common sense usage, for which see Lawrence, “Fragility of Consciousness,” 70.

<sup>138</sup> Kelly, *The Resurrection Effect*, 111.

<sup>139</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 1*, 394.

<sup>140</sup> Balthasar, *Glory 7*, 288; Kelly, *The Resurrection Effect*, 113.



increasing integration of all aspects of our human functioning occurs.<sup>141</sup> This spiritual integration, wherein the subject in love with God is open to the effects of grace, will mean that every dimension of our cognitional and volitional life is transformed.<sup>142</sup> Through the Holy Spirit human beings begin to live the fullness of God's intention for them. Love for God is a critical dynamic in this transformative process as Bernard Lonergan has stressed in his articulation of the dynamics of this transformation.

Lonergan states that, "Being in love [is] a dynamic state that sublates all that goes before, a principle of movement at once purgative and illuminative, and a principle of rest in which union is fulfilled."<sup>143</sup> Generated by moving through the different levels of consciousness towards love, self-transcendence forms us. It forms our very self; it forms our identity. In the freedom that ensues as our lives are increasingly aligned with God, we discover a larger dimension to our identity than we knew before. In Jungian terms, the limited ego begins to open to a larger self. We no longer attribute our identity to known dimensions alone. A mysterious unknown begins to contribute to the sense of self. In other words, the ego has moved to a valid subordinate position in relationship to the total personality. This distinction between the ego and the larger self, which occurs through the sublation achieved by the gift of love, may help clarify some confusion in the postmodern literature concerning the "I," an instance of which I reflect on now.

The ego, understood from a psychological point of view, is characterised by an intentionality that enables attentiveness to experience and intelligent reflection upon that experience. Moreover, it is through the ego that the person makes judgements and decisions according to apprehended values. The ego is not, however, the whole person. While postmodern literature often implicitly makes the distinction between the ego and the whole person, it does so without the clear distinctions that would avoid confusion. For example, Kevin Hart reflects on the dynamics involved when a person hears a call. He generates some confusion in his observation that when we hear a call we receive the phenomenon before we

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<sup>141</sup> Kelly, *The Resurrection Effect*, 113.

<sup>142</sup> Kelly, *The Resurrection Effect*, 114.

<sup>143</sup> Lonergan, "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness," 75.

understand it.<sup>144</sup> Something receives the phenomenon; something else understands it. In the psychological terminology we are adopting here, it is the ego that understands. Yet prior to the ego's understanding there is the action of the larger self which receives.

It is through the receptive capacity of the larger self, which has access to depths of the psyche not available to the limited ego, that there occurs the ego's subsequent experience of reverse or counter-intentionality. This phenomenon derives from resting in the union of love, for in this circumstance there may well occur a loss of all sense of the ego. The experiences of mystics and lovers exemplify this dynamic. Through the exercise of such counter-intentionality the ego must be receptive to the phenomena mediated through the larger self. Only after such receptivity can the ego begin to reflect on the spontaneously produced emotions, imagination and the symbols. While the ego is typically active, it can find rest in the union of love. Once love occurs, a "new principle" carries us along. We experience ourselves to be "parts within an ever more intimate yet ever more liberating dynamic whole."<sup>145</sup> Indeed, this whole engages us and draws us even more than we engage it.<sup>146</sup>

The duality of the subject/object distinction blurs with the experience of being in love. Love encompasses paradox and contradiction. Through love we can achieve the non-dual consciousness that is characteristic of mystical awareness.<sup>147</sup> The notion of a phenomenological conversion is helpful here, for this conversion enables the ego to be attentive to data from extra-mundane contexts. In the context of his discussion of the resurrection, Anthony Kelly describes a phenomenological conversion as being "not only to the phenomenon of consciousness itself as Lonergan has so compellingly presented it, but to

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<sup>144</sup> Hart, Introduction to Hart, ed., *Counter-Experiences*, 16.

<sup>145</sup> Lonergan, "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness," 75.

<sup>146</sup> For the observation, "we are one source of ourselves, while the transcendent sources we are engaged by are another," see Nicholas Plants, "Decentering Inwardness," in *In Deference to the Other: Lonergan and Contemporary Continental Thought*, ed. Jim Kanaris and Mark J. Doorley (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004), 26.

<sup>147</sup> Richard Rohr, *Things Hidden: Scripture as Spirituality* (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2008), 183.

the resurrection as the focal phenomenon of Christian faith in its 'saturating' effect on consciousness."<sup>148</sup> Just as Kelly considers the resurrection as warranting a phenomenological conversion, I suggest that attentiveness to the data of embodied consciousness, which are present when we are in love with God, similarly warrants a phenomenological conversion. In this circumstance, all dimensions of our consciousness are engaged: the volitional, cognitive, affective, symbolic, and somatic. It is to a further consideration of the latter that I now turn.

## 5. The Body, Dread and Religious Experience

In the context of drama and Stanislavsky's method of training actors, Hans Urs von Balthasar discusses the body in a way that is pertinent to our questions.<sup>149</sup> Stanislavsky's method enables the body to give substance to what otherwise would be a thin, cerebral outworking of a role.<sup>150</sup> Balthasar is clear: the task is one of "embodiment." He observes that Stanislavsky's method has a sacramental quality to it for its emphasis on physicality enables genuineness in performance.<sup>151</sup> Further, Balthasar notes that actors make themselves "available" for their roles.<sup>152</sup> He reflects on the "essential selflessness of actors, who, like monks and children, can convey a humility and purity with which they are willing to serve the role, and indeed, through an unselfconscious technical mastery can lose themselves in the role."<sup>153</sup> For Balthasar those pursuing God's will for their lives similarly make themselves available to God, an availability that includes the felt-sense of their bodies.

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<sup>148</sup> Kelly, *The Resurrection Effect*, 177.

<sup>149</sup> For a comprehensive presentation of the method, see Toby Cole, ed., *Acting: A Handbook of the Stanislavski Method* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1983). Note that the name is variously transliterated as Stanislavsky and Stanislavski.

<sup>150</sup> Cf. Bernard Lonergan's observation that without feeling our knowing and deciding are "paper thin," for which see Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 31.

<sup>151</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 1*, 289. Note that, while Balthasar points to Stanislavsky's method for the development of body awareness, increasing recognition of the contribution of the body to the mind-body relationship is leading psychologists to offer practical meditative exercises that achieve "neuro-plasticity," or flexibility of neural pathways. Such exercises enable an individual to achieve self-mastery, for these exercises are much more efficient means for transformation. See Kabat-Zinn, *Coming to Our Senses*; S. W. Lazar et al., "Meditation Experience is Associated with Increased Cortical Thickness," *Neuroreport* 16 (2005).

<sup>152</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 1*, 294.

<sup>153</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 1*, 294-295.

While Balthasar offers us an interesting description of the process of embodied availability for the enactment of a role, again it is Lonergan who contributes a more explanatory perspective. We turn now to consider Lonergan's approach to the bodily impact of religious experience. Lonergan has shown that attentive receptivity to mystery is essentially attentiveness to the data of consciousness. People need to learn to attend to their "self-taste" or, in other words, to the experience of their presence to themselves. Authentic and discerning human living requires attentiveness not only to experiences dubbed "religious" or "spiritual" but to all forms of psychic energy. There are, however, some expressions of such energy that can disturb one's equilibrium and can trigger a repressive mechanism, the likes of which Doran addresses with his notion of psychic conversion. Religious experience is one such expression. Engagement with God in the realm of ultimate self-transcendence may generate anxiety and dread, because it upsets the current "concrete synthesis" previously established by the subject.<sup>154</sup> Reflecting on the impact of changed horizons on a presently "successful integration of the problem of conscious living," Lonergan observes, "any change in that concrete successful synthesis of human living gives rise to anxiety."<sup>155</sup> It can generate dread. As Lonergan points out, however, such anxiety can motivate one to further action to ensure a more satisfactory synthesis.

Lonergan argues that we achieve that synthesis when consciousness integrates the "underlying neural manifolds."<sup>156</sup> Lonergan is here pointing to the way in which anxiety and dread engage both the intellectual/spiritual and sensitive dimensions of the human being at the neuropsychological level. In so doing, anxiety changes the sensitive, or neuronal and somatic, dimensions of human beings. Not only anxiety and dread but all expressions of human functioning, including those in the transcendent realm, have an impact upon the neuronal and somatic dimensions of the human being. It is for this reason that Robert Doran, for example, can comment on "the correspondence of intellectual or spiritual and sensitive

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<sup>154</sup> Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 288.

<sup>155</sup> Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 288.

<sup>156</sup> Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 289.

operators.”<sup>157</sup> Doran makes the comment in the context of considering our appropriation of the beautiful in the transcendent realm of mystery. The comment is, however, pertinent to all forms of human engagement within the realm of transcendence. This is so because of the union of somatic and psychic dimensions in human activity.

When consciousness integrates disparate neural manifolds, new neuronal pathways are created that enable not only new attitudes, emotions and behaviours but also new dimensions of spiritual sensitivity. All these expressions of human consciousness have bodily sensations accompanying them since somatic activity always accompanies psychic activity in human beings. Hence, whether we perceive a spiritual event or not—whether it is, to use a postmodern term, a “non-experience” or a “counter-experience”—it will always have a somatic dimension due to the existence of neuronal activity that carries both psychic and somatic components.

A subject’s training in attentiveness will determine the degree to which he or she is aware of such bodily sensations. Efforts at attentiveness to the highly refined and subtle somatic dimension of human engagement with transcendent mystery will considerably assist us to work constructively with the myriad of ways in which God reveals God’s unique will for our lives. Attentiveness to somatic dimensions will also assist with the decentring consequences of such exposure. William Norris Clarke refers to the “radical decentering of consciousness from self to God” that occurs when we adopt God and God’s values as our centre rather than preoccupying ourselves with our own concerns.<sup>158</sup> Bernard Lonergan also acknowledges this decentring effect when he proposes a self-transcending dynamic of intentionality as the core dynamism of human being.<sup>159</sup> This dynamism can indeed cause a decentring in the conscious subject when the luminous core of the subject is “swept up . . . into a vertical finality that is at once possible, multivalent, obscure, and indeed mysterious.”<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> For a discussion of the correspondence between intellectual, or spiritual, and sensitive operators, see Doran, “Lonergan and Balthasar: Methodological Considerations,” 78.

<sup>158</sup> Clarke, *Person and Being*, 98.

<sup>159</sup> For reflections on Lonergan’s conception of the subject as entailing a “radical decentering,” see Lawrence, “Fragility of Consciousness,” 68, 72.

<sup>160</sup> Lawrence, “Fragility of Consciousness,” 72.

We need, however, to be careful to clarify our understanding of such “decentering.”<sup>161</sup> Decentring can be a valid and authentic process as instanced by the ego’s losing centre-stage in its humble surrender to that which is greater than it, such as God, or the larger self in Jungian parlance, or self-transcendence in Lonerganian parlance. By the process of decentring, we can simply mean a shift from an egocentric world-view to a view that gives priority to the “other.” There can, however, be another understanding. It can refer to a negative pathological dimension of human experience. Saracino observes that postmodern reflection focuses on the consequences of suffering and decline. Those subjected to the fragmentation of society have an experience of decentring, which is the result of such decline.<sup>162</sup> Fred Lawrence gives yet another negative meaning—this time philosophical—to the notion of decentring. He argues that it can derive from a failure to identify an accurate position on what is real and normative. I reflected earlier that Derrida rejects both naïve realism and idealism, but does not accept a position on what is normative.<sup>163</sup> Understandably his experience would be one of being decentred, and the principles of cognitive consonance would lead him to articulate a philosophy consistent with his experience. Hence, so Lawrence claims, Derrida makes a virtue of the fictive and arbitrary, valuing that which lacks “origin and end or foundation or ground.”<sup>164</sup>

The decentring experience that occurs in the context of Lonergan’s critically realist position is vastly different. Lonergan’s notions of both self-appropriation and authentic self-transcendence afford a positive concept of decentring. This is so because Lonergan holds that the objectification of intentionality analysis, with its ultimate term of surrender to the love of God, enables a detachment to exist at the very core of a person’s self-experience.

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<sup>161</sup> For an attempt to articulate what Lawrence means when he speaks of Lonergan effecting a “radical decentering of the conscious subject correctly conceived,” see Plants, “Decentering Inwardness,” 14. Plants cites Lawrence, “Fragility of Consciousness,” 72.

<sup>162</sup> Saracino, “Subject for the Other,” 66.

<sup>163</sup> Lawrence, “Fragility of Consciousness,” 74. For the observation that critical realism can remain “intact and relevant in the contemporary Continental philosophical landscape,” see Plants, “Decentering Inwardness,” 29.

<sup>164</sup> Lawrence, “Fragility of Consciousness,” 74-75.

The process of detachment entails a dynamic of decentring. We need to be careful, however, to make some clear distinctions about Lonergan's notion of self in this context.<sup>165</sup> In Lonergan's view, when we refer to ourselves, we can refer to the self either as an object of perception or to the experience of the self as subject. The former is the explicit self, appropriated through identifying the self-transcending dimensions of one's intentional consciousness; the latter is the intimate, implicit, tacitly experienced self. Plants warns that a careless reading of Lonergan is vulnerable to confusing the two. We can identify the subject with the explicit, self-appropriated subject rather than with the tacit experience of consciousness. Such erroneous self-appropriation fails to achieve the "radical decentering" that is the ultimate mark of self-transcendence.<sup>166</sup>

Importantly, such radical decentring only occurs when a subject, who has identified his or her dynamics of intentional consciousness, also surrenders to a "subject-transcending source."<sup>167</sup> Ultimately, such subjects are fully authentic only inasmuch as they are cooperating with the self-transcending dynamic towards the divine Other. Plants' comments here are helpful:

Our presence to ourselves as subjects is constitutive of human subjectivity . . . because it brings us closer to ourselves as engaged in a process which can provide us with access to the intelligible universe, but only when we willingly surrender all of ourselves to the radically decentring process whereby we participate in transcendent sources of meaning and value.<sup>168</sup>

Plants, following Charles Taylor, calls us to a "lived experience of being radically decentered" through engaging both in transcendental method and in surrender to the Transcendent.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> See Plants, "Decentering Inwardness," 13-32.

<sup>166</sup> Jim Kanaris and Mark J. Doorley, "Introduction: In Deference," in *In Deference to the Other: Lonergan and Contemporary Continental Thought*, ed. Jim Kanaris and Mark J. Doorley (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004), 6. Kanaris here makes an editorial comment on Plants' contribution which draws on the work of both Bernard Lonergan and Charles Taylor.

<sup>167</sup> Plants, "Decentering Inwardness," 27.

<sup>168</sup> Plants, "Decentering Inwardness," 28. The emphasis is mine.

<sup>169</sup> See Plants, "Decentering Inwardness," 26; Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

We must be alert to our interiority and allow transcendent realities to engage us.<sup>170</sup> Both are necessary to constitute us as authentic subjects. This is a very pertinent point for the one who hears God's call and discerns a vocation. Ultimately, God must be the centre of our decentred experience of ourselves. Nevertheless, the experience of God's presence at the centre of a person's life will not supplant the necessity for the activity of authentic self-appropriation. Rather, it will sublate the authentic self-appropriation that is a precondition for the radical decentring that situates us in God.<sup>171</sup>

Hans Urs von Balthasar also alludes to the dimension of decentring in the process of conversion towards, and engagement in, mission with God. Balthasar points out that conversion entails a "turning around."<sup>172</sup> The subject leaves behind the familiar and that which was previously experienced and understood. Eventually, there occurs the realisation that the former was fragmentary. It has not been lost; it is found again, but within the context of a much fuller dimension of human being and living. As Balthasar observes, it is found again "within the totality, on the far side of a hiatus."<sup>173</sup> The "hiatus" is a decentring experience. By a "leap" we leave the fragments we have known to embrace a fuller dimension of Christian experience through faith.<sup>174</sup> Such a decentring leap will necessarily produce anxiety to the extent that it upsets our previous neural syntheses. It is important to be aware of such anxiety and to understand its meaning. Without such awareness unconscious defence mechanisms will be activated, which thereby destroy the opportunity for God to achieve a transformative work in the devout subject. The task is to learn to accept the ensuing somatic experience of anxiety without negative evaluation and unhelpful reactivity and with a constructive response of faith. Critical for the possibility of such acceptance is, as we have been consistently arguing, a receptive awareness of one's bodily experiences.

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<sup>170</sup> Plants, "Decentering Inwardness," 25-26.

<sup>171</sup> Note that the "decentring" being referred to in this section is typically described as "centring" in psychotherapeutic or spiritual direction contexts.

<sup>172</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 3*, 421.

<sup>173</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 3*, 421. This finding after losing is a regular feature of Christian experience.

<sup>174</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Drama 3*, 422.



## 6. Summary and Conclusion

God comes to our aid when we seek to experience, understand, decide and act in a connatural state of attunement to God. In these circumstances human consciousness is frequently infused by grace that manifests in a range of spiritual phenomena, such as the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual senses. In this chapter I have sought to find an explanatory account for these phenomena by adopting a very specific notion of “affectivity.”

Following my focus upon Doran’s organic expansion of psychic conversion in the previous chapter, I continued to observe that such phenomena have bodily consequences. Highly refined though they may be, spiritual senses nevertheless resonate in human beings who are embodied souls and not pure spirits. Consequently, I suggested that there are data of consciousness characterised by interoceptive sensations to which we can, through heightened attentiveness, become aware. I suggested that the term “pneumo-somatic” could be applied to these spiritually-infused embodied experiences. I observed that such awareness will serve a capacity to cooperate constructively with the anxiety and dread that might be occasioned by the new horizons engendered by encounters with the living God.

We have now reiterated the theme that has been the focus of attention, namely the importance of attentiveness to embodied consciousness in order to discern God’s call. While ultimately the encounter between God and the human being is mysterious, it nevertheless engages embodied human beings through ways that, to some extent, can be explained. The existential tranquillity and rest that come through attunement to God’s call warrants the ascetic work involved in learning attentive receptivity to grace in all its various manifestations. We turn now to the final chapter where we reflect on and synthesise our findings.

## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSION

I have been endeavouring to make a contribution toward the development of a theological phenomenology of vocation and in so doing have reached several conclusions. A major observation has been that, for devout people of faith, existential rest can derive from the discovery of vocation and its particular expression in mission. The work of Hans Urs von Balthasar helped me arrive at this conclusion. Another observation has been that attentiveness to the pneumo-somatic data of embodied consciousness significantly aids the discernment of that vocation. The work of Bernard Lonergan, Robert Doran and some postmodernists helped my reflections in this area.

Chapter One revealed how the topic arose from my experience as a psychologist, working at the interface of spirituality and psychology. I had worked with devout clients who had undergone extreme suffering that stripped away their usual ways of relating to the world and made their familiar modes of self-experience foreign to them. They were consequently exposed to existential self-questioning. They were, in effect, asking “Who am I?” Self-acceptance originated from awareness of, and insight into, the felt-sense of an apophatic dimension of mystery at the core of their being. Self-discovery would ultimately derive from the realisation that they would only know who they were through prayerful engagement with God and through finding the vocation to which God was calling them. My experience generated two questions: first, *why* finding a vocation is existentially satisfying, and secondly, *how* it is that human persons engage with the mystery which they experience at the core of their being and which leads to the existential question, “Who am I?” Since neither question could be adequately addressed by psychological categories, I drew on philosophical and theological categories to answer my questions. The appropriate method for the investigation was phenomenological because such a method attends specifically to how things are experienced in consciousness.

I present my conclusions under the following headings:

1. Vocation: Relevant for Today
2. Vocation: The Resolution to an Existential Self-Question

3. How Human Consciousness can Engage with Mystery
4. Future Research

### **1. Vocation: Relevant for Today**

In Chapter Two I pointed to the ways in which the topic of vocation is most important for today. In the absence of a felt-sense of being called by someone or something beyond themselves, people tend to drift aimlessly through life. I explored Conyers' argument that many who lack an awareness of personal value find self-worth through the exercise of power rather than through loving service, which derives from a sense of vocation and which builds the fabric of society. Yet, as Conyers points out, the adoption of the notion of vocation is difficult, since it challenges egocentric ideas that we are makers of our own destinies. Humility is required for its appropriation. The notion of vocation also requires an acknowledgement of the reality of mystery and of the capacity of mystery to engage with human consciousness in ways that enable it to be both experienced and understood.

The meaning of the word "vocation" has varied considerably in the history of the Christian lexicon. Vocation was once defined as conversion to the Christian faith. Later, it came to be understood as the adoption of particular states of life or particular roles and tasks. Now the notion of vocation is more a matter of authentic being, expressed by lives lived in truth and love. Yet two things remain constant. Responding to God's call entails both intimacy with Christ and loving service of others. The form of such service varies according to each person. Each one will have his or her unique way of living out the life of Christ within. Living out a vocation that is understood as a mode of authentic being, rather merely achieving external forms of particular life patterns, will entail a heightened degree of self-awareness in relationship with God. It will require that one aligns everyday decision-making with God's will for the moment. Hence, authentic vocational expression requires the capacity for ongoing discernment. It is not merely a matter of discernment operative for a single major decision.

The sixteenth century saint, Ignatius of Loyola, has been highly influential in reflection on these matters. His example and instruction have inspired generations of Christ's followers with the vision of making choices that accord with God's will for them. Ignatius insists that it

is possible to find God's will in concrete circumstances and articulates the means that enable such discernment. In so doing, he follows scripture in its recommendation to test the spirits that guide one's decision-making. Contemporary writers continue the tradition in their identification of further elements that assist appropriate vocational choices. They all have in common the need for self-awareness and a heightened degree of attentiveness to interiority. While many speak of the need to attend to the movements of the "heart," others offer more explanatory categories for the mystery of human engagement with God. Before I explored *how* the human person engages with mystery, however, I first looked more fully at *why* the discovery of vocation satisfies the existential quest. Hans Urs von Balthasar served me in this respect.

## **2. Vocation: The Resolution to an Existential Self-Question**

In Chapter Three, I reflected on the way in which Hans Urs von Balthasar's theology was informed by his own dramatic experience of calling. An experience while on retreat summoned him into his vocation, a vocation wherein he knew only that he was to serve. That service was to take numerous forms: as priest and theologian, as chaplain to students, and as spiritual director to his colleague, Adrienne von Speyr, as well as to those in the community they formed. For both Balthasar and von Speyr, transparency of soul and openness to God were essential for the self-dispossession so necessary for an authentic Christian life. For them both our primary call is to love and in that love to establish a "bridge" between earth and heaven.

Balthasar reflects on the consequences of love for the structure of our ethics. While love fulfils the law, it also facilitates the exercise of the law. Law, when it lacks any perceived beauty, drives us through the relatively laborious exercise of the consideration of its truth and goodness. In contrast, the beauty of that which we love draws us spontaneously from within. For Hans Urs von Balthasar the transcendental of beauty is essential for our appreciation of, and engagement with, the glory of God and God's revelation of Jesus Christ in our lives. We will only happily respond to God's call if the beauty of love leads us; we are less likely to respond if it appears to be law that drives us. In other words, the considered vocational choice must appear attractive in some way. Otherwise it will be merely adopted as a dry obligation, with a consequential questionable capacity for endurance. For Balthasar

there are, then, aesthetic preconditions for the pursuit of one's calling. Aesthetics and drama are intimately intertwined, for encounter must precede conversation.

Central to Balthasar's considerations are the transcendentals of beauty, goodness and truth, which cannot be separated from one another. Their interpenetration manifests itself not only in objects but also in persons and their vocations. Living out a vocation involves good and true acts accomplished in love and in response to the perception of a beauty that calls one to self-transcendence. To the extent to which people achieve such transcendence, they become radiant mediators of a beauty which is the intra-mundane expression of God's glory. This is only possible because of God's indwelling presence within the self-transcending human being. Balthasar speaks of this presence as fulfilling the *Gestalt* of each person. While it is a freely chosen form that is totally intimate and unique to the person, it is also God's foundational "idea" (*Urdee*) for the person. The person discovers that identification with this form is thoroughly rewarding, for it constitutes his or her very essence.

Integral to the perception of one's form is the perception of Jesus Christ, since it is only in union with him that this rewarding expression of one's essence is discovered. Such perception is the fruit of faith, which establishes new modes of seeing and responding. While such perception requires development, it is not achieved through erudition. It is achieved only through humble, prayerful and receptive abandonment to the various modes in which Christ is revealed. Surrender to the transformative effect of Christ on one's life yields an increasing correspondence with Christ and shapes the believer for mission, which is the unique, historical manifestation of God's call to the believer.

Balthasar identifies two general classifications for the expression of vocation on the basis of the two states in which Christ lived. Initially, Balthasar contends, Christ lived in obedience to the commandments, exemplified by his obedience to his parents. Subsequently, Christ left his family to serve his heavenly Father wholeheartedly, an obedience that required the surrender of all earthly priorities for a new submission to heavenly priorities alone. These two states or stages, which Balthasar terms the "secular" and "elected" states respectively, characterise Christian lives also. While not all are called into the elected state, Balthasar observes that all are called to a love that is willing to renounce everything even if not actually required to do so. Even though the elected state entails the pain of leaving kith and

kin, and sometimes incurs societal censure, it nevertheless rewards obedience with the joy of a new intimacy with, and freedom in, Christ. In this state, one's vocation and its unique missionary expression become clearly delineated in a way that is not always the case for the secular state, lived as it is within more familiar situations of marriage and family life.

Balthasar adopts dramatic categories to explore the Christian's exercise of mission. He reflects on the drama of discipleship that occurs within a context of spiritual warfare. Each person must play his or her part in the battle; each one has an allotted role. Yet, in contrast to Christ for whom person and role are identical, there is for the human person a distinction between the role and the "I" who performs the role. This distinction creates a tension, for while on the one hand role and human personhood are not identical, on the other hand each person must assume full ownership for the exercise of the role. However, just as in a play a character becomes more and more fully delineated as the play progresses, so the character of the human person becomes more and more fully delineated as he or she enters into the assigned mission. Moreover, the person discovers an increasing alignment between the inmost "I" and the outer role, as he or she becomes increasingly identified with Christ and his mission. The answer to "Who am I?" gradually evolves through faith-filled participation in the action.

Chapter Four presented Balthasar's philosophical and theological categories to advance our understanding of the origins of such self-discovery. It began with a consideration of the epistemological bases for human engagement with mystery. There are ontological, Christological and anthropological foundations for the receptivity to God that enables growing identification with Christ and consequent self-discovery in the exercise of a vocation in union with Christ. For the human person the exercise of receptivity is more basic than the exercise of initiative. Prior to our individuality is our existence in community. Hence, the valuing of relationship and receptivity must precede, and have primacy over, the valuing of autonomy and self-possession. Moreover, receptivity to Christ will entail not only relationship with him but a life patterned after his. It will entail entering into identification with him in his paschal mystery. The consequent death to all egoic self-determination will yield an increased freedom to discern God's will in each moment through the development of an indifference to personal desires. In this process the person learns a capacity for

attunement to mystery. Just how it is that the human person can achieve attunement to mystery is a question that I addressed in this and in the remaining chapters.

### **3. How Human Consciousness can Engage with Mystery**

Attunement to the trinitarian God, revealed in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, is attunement to mystery. It requires that one attend to the impact upon consciousness of phenomena that defy the ready grasp of everyday common sense. Here, kataphatic awareness of images filled with readily articulated meaning gives way to an apophatic awareness of a something “more” that is much less easily articulated. For Balthasar only the exercise of contemplative prayer can prepare the person for engagement with such mysteries. In prayer the person becomes familiar with the leading of the Holy Spirit; it is a familiarity that can lead to a life lived constantly attentive to the Spirit’s presence. Balthasar acknowledges that such charismatic living can be problematic from the point of view of the institutional Church. What is to say that the former is authentic and not merely the exercise of deluded self-love? The answer for Balthasar rests in the totality of a person’s life being aligned with God’s revealed will. The whole thrust of a person’s life must demonstrate willingness for death to self and surrender to God. Further reflection on this issue takes Balthasar into epistemological considerations of human consciousness.

I considered Balthasar’s efforts to articulate the epistemological dimensions of human engagement with mystery. Balthasar insists that we must allow a dimension of “unknowing” to reside at the foundation of cognitional reflection, for there is mystery at the heart of being insofar as it comprises the transcendentals of beauty, truth and goodness. Isomorphic with these transcendentals, there must be within the human person aesthetic, theoretic and ethical attitudes to enable their perception. Here Balthasar offers only a faculty psychology to account for the exercise of human consciousness in engagement with mystery. I then proposed that the notion of intentionality, as articulated in Bernard Lonergan’s account of knowledge, could more adequately explain the phenomena that Balthasar addresses. Since Balthasar, like Lonergan, rejects naïve realism and adopts a critical realism, there is a common philosophical foundation for mutual conversation between these two thinkers.

Chapter Five discussed Lonergan's vision of human consciousness wherein the Holy Spirit brings about an interior transformation that is analogous to the movements of consciousness within Jesus Christ. For Lonergan the experience of grace is the experience of self-transcendence with its accompanying openness to the intelligible, the true and the good, culminating in being in love with God. Again, like Balthasar, Lonergan envisaged a life lived alert to the specific, concrete expression of God's will, not only in a single major moment of decision-making, but in the ongoing decisions of daily life. For Lonergan such mysticism could be lived as a way of life.

Lonergan explores how human consciousness engages with mystery. He adopts the notion of vertical finality, whereby human beings are oriented towards transcendent values in the search to bring closure to their sense of incompleteness and becoming. It is this experience of incompleteness that generates the restlessness of which the saints speak, and energises them to engage with the divine mystery in their search for their vocation. Resolution, with its accompanying rest, occurs through self-transcendent love of God, which manifests in authentically responsible action. Attentiveness to experience and intelligent reflection upon that experience will undergird the exercise of such action. Awareness of these intrapersonal dynamics will further the exercise of self-knowledge, for which Lonergan, like the mystics, calls. Lonergan points to an important component of self-knowledge that derives from awareness of the tacit background experience of self in the exercise of intentionality. Our essential sense of self derives from a primordially immediate experience of presence to self. The task for the seeker of God's will is to develop an awareness of the felt-sense of presence to self as it is experienced in prayerful reflection on possible choices for action. It is this dynamic, along with the reference point of the consolation without previous cause, which enables discernment and affords increasing intimacy with Jesus Christ.

Religious conversion is foundational for the awareness of such transcendent values. The discovery of one's self is the outcome of a process, for human development constantly confronts one with the challenge of new horizons. Conversion occurs when we accept a transformation of those horizons, a transformation that can affect our experience of ourselves and of others as well as of our imaginations, memories and feelings. We are exposed to a "known unknown" and the required change can evoke anxiety and, sometimes, dread. It is necessary to learn how to accept these experiences that manifest themselves at a



bodily level, since a failure to accept them may hinder the conversion that is an essential dimension of cooperation with God's gracious transformative will for a person's life.

I explored the value of awareness of embodied consciousness in the context of the artist's experience of creativity. The artist develops a "felt-sense" of what is worthwhile. While for the artist this felt-sense accompanies kataphatic imagery, for those who are alert to religious categories the felt-sense of engagement with mystery will have apophatic dimensions. An accepting awareness of the experience of embodied consciousness will prevent the premature closure that can occur when we too hastily analyse the feelings and thoughts that ensue upon graced experiences. It will thereby leave the person open to the fullness of that which God wishes to infuse. Only a regular habit of contemplative prayer will foster such heightened self-awareness in engagement with God, a habit that Lonergan encouraged with the biblical precept, "Pray without ceasing." Such a habit is also necessary to help identify the various forms of bias and blind spots that prevent our openness to the healing love of God.

I acknowledged that most people are not open to developing such a heightened awareness of the dynamics of self-transcending intentional consciousness. Yet they nevertheless insist that they "know" they have heard from God. I explored the dynamics that undergird their confidence, noting that mystical prayer can yield experiences that defy articulation yet nevertheless generate assurances that God has intervened. Lonergan's categories of intentional consciousness helped us understand these phenomena, for, while the experiences themselves may be ineffable, they must still be subject to intelligent inquiry and reasonable reflection. It is this latter reflection that generates the confidence that one has heard from God.

While Lonergan's categories are immensely helpful, I noted in Chapter Six that another Lonergan scholar, Robert Doran, provides categories for understanding human consciousness that supplement those of Lonergan. I first dismissed, however, the possible consideration that the approaches of Balthasar and Lonergan constituted a collision of perspectives, thereby making conversation between them inappropriate, if not impossible. I pointed out that both Balthasar and Lonergan adopt a critically realist position and that

Robert Doran considers that Balthasar's special theological categories complement Lonergan's general categories.

Robert Doran's notion of psychic conversion supplements Lonergan's intellectual, moral and religious conversions. Psychic conversion removes the habit of repressive censorship of the symbols that emerge spontaneously into consciousness. It enables the subject to reflect constructively on the significance of psychosomatic and, I suggested, also pneumo-somatic activity. Hence, psychic conversion helps develop orthopathy, or "right feeling," which Doran insists is an essential component of orthopraxis. Not only appropriate beliefs but also appropriate feelings are necessary accompaniments to our endeavours to serve the kingdom of God. Ultimately, it is possible to achieve an affective integrity that furthers our capacity to discern our vocation. Such integrity enables us to negotiate the dialectical tension between spirit and matter, or between intentionality and sensitivity. Imagery and symbolism are engaged in this tension and also, as Doran appreciated in his later works, somatic resonances generated at a psycho-physiological level. Through attentive reflection on these phenomena, psychic equilibrium is established at a higher level of integration than was previously available to the subject. Such psychic equilibrium contributes to our capacity for discernment, a topic important for Doran, formed as he is by St. Ignatius' teaching on discernment.

Doran observes that Bernard Lonergan's writings illuminate the distinctions between the three different Ignatian "times" for decision-making. Doran argues that the way in which Lonergan addresses decision-making in *Insight* is congruent with the Ignatian "third time," for the emphasis is on reasonable and intelligent reflection on experience without particular attention to feelings. In contrast, Lonergan's discussion of the good in *Method in Theology* is more aligned with the "second time" for discernment, for there Lonergan does emphasise more fully the influence of feelings on decision-making. Doran also considers Ignatius' "first time," accompanied as it is, as Ignatius recognised, by the consolation without previous cause. Here, he observes, there are no further questions to be asked and hence one can make a confident decision on the basis of assured judgement. Doran explores further the consolation without previous cause in the context of his notion of attunement as a moment of nonintentional rest. This moment differs from the exercise of intentionality towards knowledge or ethical action. In contrast, when we rest in God, we experience, Doran argues,

a nonintentional moment wherein we receive God's love. In this moment we are attuned to God and to God's will for us. Neurotheological research has also demonstrated a link between neurological functioning and such religious experiences, and this is clearly a field that could shed further light on our question of how human consciousness engages with mystery. Nevertheless, our emphasis at that point was on the phenomenality of the nonintentional moment of rest in, and attunement to, God.

Postmodern thought, which I considered in Chapter Seven, would suggest that rather than being a moment of *non*-intentionality, such attunement is accompanied by a reverse intentionality, or counter-intentionality, wherein we are actively receptive to God's grace and love. I considered both this and phenomena such as the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual senses, which accompany the reverse intentionality of attunement to God. I identified the gift of wisdom as particularly important because it establishes within us a connaturality with God, thereby enabling us to make decisions in accordance with God's will for us. A modern Thomist interpreter, Anthony Kelly, whose thinking has been informed by Bernard Lonergan, offered me a means for understanding the gift of wisdom in terms of human consciousness. I sought yet further explanatory categories, and looked to the saints' experience of the spiritual senses, which accompany growing intimacy with God, as a means for further insights. I anticipated that, since the spiritual senses, like the gifts, engage both spirit and body, a study of the phenomenality of such senses might satisfy the exigence for understanding.

I first drew on Hans Urs von Balthasar's observations concerning the spiritual senses. Balthasar notes that the revelation of Jesus Christ was manifested in a sensory mode. Consequently, our present day appropriation of that revelation must likewise engage the physical senses, which must be able to be transformed to perceive the phenomenon of Christ's revelation. Balthasar believes that it is the ongoing oscillation between consolation and desolation that gradually transforms us, eventually enabling our sensibilities to resemble those of Jesus and Mary. While Balthasar describes the phenomenon, he does not provide an adequate explanation of the spiritual senses in themselves. In the search to understand how human consciousness engages with mystery, I sought categories that go beyond the merely descriptive. I turned once again to consider the phenomenon of connaturality, this time with the aid of the category of "affective knowledge," a category relevant also to the

gifts of the Spirit. This afforded an understanding that the gifts are part of a seamless whole in the affectivity of the Pauline “new creation” in Christ. Consequently, attentiveness to the affective dimensions inherent in both the tacit ground of our intentionality and the transformed sensory modalities assists in keeping alert to the leading of God’s gracious action in our lives.

The postmodernists advanced my investigation, for they too uphold the value of attentiveness to the body. Through such awareness, subjects find that mind and body are healed of the frequently dissociated condition of present-day living. The postmodernists encourage the sense of being given to ourselves in the process of hearing God’s call, a phenomenon that so saturates us with meaning that it defies common sense categories for explanation and necessitates the use of paradox and dialectic. Yet for postmodernist theologians, as for all the theologians considered in this study, ultimately faith is foundational for participation in God. I discussed the decentring that faith can elicit wherein the ego loses centre stage in its humble submission to Jesus Christ. The successful negotiation of the anxiety and dread, which such decentring can generate, requires careful attentiveness to the body. Developing the capacity for non-judgemental bodily awareness creates flexibility in otherwise rigid neuronal pathways. Transformation of experience and behaviours can then ensue at both natural and supernatural levels. People can develop the foundational psychological equilibrium that is important not only for a satisfactory quality of life but also for new dimensions of spiritual sensitivity.

In conclusion, I note that I began the project with two questions: first, why finding one’s vocation is existentially satisfying and secondly, how human beings engage with the mystery that enables that finding. I considered that the answer to these questions would contribute toward the development of a theological phenomenology of vocation. Essentially, I have proposed that the discovery of one’s vocation entails union with Christ for whom person and mission are one. As we enter into that union, so we too experience an interior integration of person and vocation that brings peace and rest. I have argued that one significantly helpful aspect of this faith-filled entry into Christ is attentiveness to the pneumo-somatic data of embodied consciousness. While there are many facets to the task of aligning our lives with Jesus Christ, bodily awareness has been the facet that has been the subject of attention in this study. I consider the emphasis on this dynamic to be the most significant element in the

contribution of this study toward the development of a theological phenomenology of vocation.

Throughout, I have sought understanding of the phenomena involved in the process of discerning one's vocation. I contend that the insights gained through this study have consequences for praxis; specifically, they have consequences for spiritual direction. I consider that a heightened awareness of the importance of embodied consciousness in the process of vocational discernment will assist the work of spiritual directors. This study does not, however, purport to offer the training necessary to achieve such awareness. Such training would require a seminar and workshop context. Nevertheless, it does indicate the value of awareness of embodied consciousness in vocational discernment and provides a foundation for further reflection on these matters.

I have necessarily drawn upon a great range of perspectives for my argument. Future research with a narrower focus and greater depth could make a significant contribution to furthering our understanding of the human person's engagement with mystery and its contribution to the identification of vocation.

#### **4. Possible Future Research**

A major field awaiting further research is the relationship between human consciousness and the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual senses. I suggest that a more explanatory account would draw on the category of pneumo-somatic phenomena and the burgeoning field of neurotheology. While scholars such as Bernard Lonergan and Robert Doran have made major contributions to theological considerations of human consciousness, much would be gained from more interdisciplinary research, engaging studies of neuro-psychology, with its neurological, psychological and somatic emphases, and the theological field of pneumatology.

Yet another area to be explored is the consequence for human self-awareness of an increasing integration of person and mission in Jesus Christ. Once an egocentric focus diminishes, union with Christ gains increasing dominance in the person's self-experience. In such circumstances, questions concerning the nature of such a transformed consciousness

arise. What happens to self-awareness as this process continues over many years? While studies in mysticism have addressed these questions in different ways over the centuries, the questions warrant revisiting now that interdisciplinary studies can contribute to their examination. St. Paul observes that, at a particular stage of his spiritual development, it is no longer he who lives, but Christ who lives in him (Gal 2:20). Hans Urs von Balthasar refers to the “unselfing” (*Entselbstung*) that occurs as people learn to give themselves utterly in obedient and receptive surrender to God’s will. Contemporary mystics refer to an experience of “no-self” wherein all self-awareness disappears after a life-time lived in obedient union with Christ. Prima facie such experiences are akin to that of St. Catherine of Siena who was told by the Lord that while God was “He who is,” she was “she who is not.” I suggest that further exploration using categories drawn from contemporary experiences would make a useful contribution to the field.

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