

The Third Theorem: Contemporary Expression of Trinitarian Thought.

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In his essay on *Grace and Freedom*, Bernard Lonergan alludes to the development of a theorem concerning the supernatural which enabled the writers of the 13th century, particularly Aquinas, to formulate coherently the relationship of grace and nature.¹

The theorem of the supernatural clarified the character of grace as properly "gratuitous" and "free," that is, distinct from creation's integrity and subsistence. The confusion existed because creation itself, when considered as the result of God's will, also could be designated as a gratuitous and free gift of God. Yet the reality and integrity of creation was always "symbolized" as prior to the experience of grace itself. The quandry arose: how not to reduce everything to being grace of one sort or another and still retain some specific reference for the language of grace as employed by the theological tradition. After all, when something is made to mean everything (grace= all reality) then it stops meaning anything at all.²

Connected with the problem of the relation of creation and grace was the difficulty of distinguishing the character of a "natural virtue," a quality belonging to the creature as creature, from a "theological virtue," a quality bestowed on an already existing creature possessing its own properties and inherent tendencies. The struggle was to understand how it is that although we must achieve a living orientation within the life of God (merit) to be saved, we have a non-negligible reality besides the grace that will save us. Otherwise there will be no human behaviour left to be redeemed.

Lonergan argues that the steps taken by Philip the Chancellor of the University of Paris (1218-1230) completed a process whereby

1. Bernard Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, (N.Y. Herder and Herder, 1971), pp. 11-19.

2. Pelagius' fundamental error was to designate creation as the foundational act of grace. Post-creational achievement was implicitly empowered by this first act of grace. But if the integrity of the language of salvation was to be preserved, grace had to be located 1) in the eternal life of God; 2) in the impartation of this life through Christ either proleptically or actually. Hence grace belongs properly to the realm of redemption, not creation. See Augustine's *On Nature and Grace* 52-59 in *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1971) pp. 139-141.

two orders of being were conceptualized, the one (supernatural) order encompassing grace, faith, charity and merit and the other (natural) order encompassing nature, reason and the natural love of the creature for God its source and end. The two orders are analogously, even if not directly, proportionate, each level of existence being realized through different agencies and initiatives, both orders being referred ultimately to the providence of God. Because of our constituency in the natural order, we love our own proper good on account of the common good of the whole universe (which is God), (*Summa Theologica*, Pt. 1,2 q. 109, art.3) whereas in the supernatural order we find the healing of our nature so that we can do the good proportionate to nature and gain super-added strength to carry out works of supernatural virtue which are meritorious. (*Summa Theologica*, Pt. 1,2 q. 109, art. 2)³

Loneragan contends that the distinction between the natural and the supernatural is a theorem which secures "the validity of a line of reference termed nature."⁴ The theorem, like the Lorentz transformation, does not add extra data to the theological question any more than we discover new stars through explaining through the Lorentz transformation our relation to the ones which exist in the universe. Rather we come to understand through Lorentz's equations that they exist in a structure of time not simultaneous with our perception of them. Similarly theologically the real data remain the love of God and love of self, charity and cupidity, the elect and the *massa damnata*, yet a coherence of the interrelation between what is given as a primordial orientation (earth time-space/"natural" human being) and a displaced and "other" structure of existence (other galaxy time-space/"supernatural" or "graced" mode of human being) can be formulated and rendered intelligible. The intelligibility is achieved through retaining the inherent meaning of the distinct terms of reference so that neither grace nor nature is subverted through their mutual co-relation. One is not reduced to the other and yet a real relationship is postulated which maintains both their distinctiveness and yet the possibility of commonality through the medium of their interaction. Their final basis of unity is achieved through the intellectual grasp

3. One way of grasping the distinction between natural virtue and supernatural merit is to remember that the growth of natural virtue occurs when we copy and imitate and become like those who are as good as we ourselves can be and the growth of supernatural merit occurs when we become good through a goodness which is beyond our capacity to imitate and yet still has been demonstrated to be accessible through those human lives who have "graced" history. The first act of imitation of the saints is to renounce the direct possibility of imitation. Our awareness that we cannot control this merit is the first meritorious realization.

4. Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, p. 16.

of "what is" between them, that is, as truth.

Lonergeran advances the concept of a theorem to explain the mode of apprehension which allowed the thinkers of the 13th century, especially Thomas, to preserve the meaning of natural liberty (the reality of which Aristotle's work was both a testimony and an example) and to maintain the meaning of the language and referent of grace. Thomas developed the "existentialist" language of grace as an "infused habit," an infused orientation of one's being, and so formulated the reality of grace in a way that went beyond the Augustinian notion of grace as the psychological liberation of the will.⁵

Lonergeran uses the "similitude" of the theorem to explain the breakthrough, the Copernican revolution, which led to the Thomistic formulation and elaboration of the distinctiveness of, yet the interrelation between, grace and nature. The notion of theorem, I will argue, is helpful not only in illuminating the achievement of mediaeval thought, but also in providing a means by which we can grasp another pivotal development in the Christian tradition, namely the introduction of the concept of the "eternal" into Christian discourse about God. I will explore this development using this paradigm of the theorem. Then I will turn our attention to the contemporary scene since Kant and suggest we are in the process of conducting the search for a contemporary theorem to encompass the data of the preceding achievements.

Since a theorem does not add or subtract to the data but assists our thought about the data by achieving a coherency of relations, the term "theorem" may be used to point to an even more foundational achievement of coherency in the Christian tradition than even that of the Thomistic "supernatural/natural" formulation. I refer specifically the theorem of the eternal worked out through the first centuries of the church's life, especially through the theology of the Alexandrines as represented most brilliantly by Origen and Athanasius. Origen, I wish to assert, was a foundational thinker for Christian theology because he made the Platonic concept of the eternal a fundamental "theorem" for its conceptualization of God and God's relation to the world. Origen's language of the "eternal" reality of God enabled him to retain the data of the Christian truths of creation and the role of the Logos in that creation while postulating at the same the essential difference between them, namely their respective reality as time-bound and changing (cre-

5. Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, p. 17. Note that Thomas succeeds in defining a "natural" scope of goodness without adopting Pelagius' position. From the point of view of the reformers who did not understand the theorem of the supernatural, Thomas "naturally" would be perceived as Pelagian.

ation) and as eternal and changeless (the Logos). After exploring why I believe Origen advanced the foundational or "first" theorem for Christian thought, a theorem which was instrumental both in provoking and in resolving the trinitarian debates of the fourth century, I will suggest that we are today attempting to formulate a "third" theorem, a theorem of the "relational," a theorem to provide coherence to the sum of Christian experience which has been shaped and conditioned by the power of the two operative theorems of the eternal and the supernatural.

But first things first (or thereabouts). I wish to suggest that Origen's introduction of the concept of the "eternal" into Christian discourse was just as momentous an event as the later formulation of the concept of the supernatural as explicated most brilliantly by Thomas. Origen spoke of the eternal as the proper way of designating the relationship between the Father and the Son. His formulation sought to explicate the "difference in unity" between the Father and Son so that the monotheistic requirements of the tradition could be respected on the one hand and the integrity of the distinction between the Father and the Son recently put into question by the modalist explanation (Father and Son are just different aspects of the same divine person's unitive being) could be maintained on the other. It was Origen who first saw the importance of holding that the Son is "eternally begotten" of the Father.⁶

Origen's insistence on the "eternal" as the characteristic of the relation between Father and Son was original and foundational. It meant that the relation could not be conceived as a process related externally to itself. There could be no "outside" to view the relation, for the relation is not describable by any temporal or spatial process. Yet the relation has a reality and that reality is understood by the word "eternal." By this Origen meant that the relation does not change. But does not a relation between two realities (or three, for Origen includes the Holy Spirit in the eternal) imply the necessity of change for the relation to exist? Origen agreed there was only *one* reality (ousia) expressed as the relation, but the three are distinct in subsistence or hypostasis. Christians can talk of "two" Gods, Father and Son, but there is only one divine reality.⁷ The relation then is not a "changing" relation, nor yet a modal relation, but a relation of three eternal subsistences (*hypostases*). By calling it an "eternal" relation Origen does forsake the pure Platonism which engendered the concept of the "eter-

6. J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978), pp. 128-129.

7. Origen, *Dialogue with Heraclides*, in J. Oulton and H. Chadwick, *Alexandrian Christianity*, (London: SCM Press, 1954) pp. 437-439.

nal" and which placed it outside *any* relation. One can argue that it is a defective theorem (the neo-Platonists were not convinced by it) but here I merely wish to indicate that Origen used the eternal as a way of giving coherence to the distinctiveness of Father and Son while maintaining as well the overarching requirement of postulating their unity as one God.

I draw attention to the "eternal" as the first theorem, for it succeeded in co-relating the theological data of "God" and "Son of God" coherently. It thereby served as a basis for distinguishing between the divine and the human, allowing both their full integrity. Athanasius in his defence of the *homoousios* will employ the co-relation to account for the saving work of Christ as both full God and man. For us, the word "eternal" is so familiar, even trite, that we forget that its specialized reference is not self-evident but rather the result of a process of debate and contention. Origen did not even succeed in giving "eternal" a positive definition. In Platonic tradition it signified changelessness and immutability.⁸ (It is Thomas Aquinas who relates the reality of God to being and gives a different orientation to the meaning of eternal). For Origen it provided a point of reference for language about the foundational symbols of "God the Father" and "Son/Logos" rather than an explication of their content. It circumscribed a mystery, as it were, leaving the elements intact and unsubverted. But it also represented a departure from previous explication and defence of the distinctiveness and operative reality of these two foundational symbols, God the Father and Son/Logos.

To understand the importance of Origen's contribution, we must recall that Tertullian and other earlier theologians defended the distinction between God the Father and God the Logos/Son as a real distinction (against the modalists) on the basis of the biblical language which spoke of the two as distinct. Yet they did not resolve the question of how they were distinct and yet related. Their general solution was an "economic" one. It referred to the "household arrangement" or dispensation of God's revelation of himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the process of creation and redemption. They recognize a threefoldness to God's intrinsic being, but their pre-occupation is not with the eternal Godhead as one and three. Hippolytus speaks of the Word as only proleptically Son until the Incarnation. Tertullian can speak of the Son's generation as Son as "dating" to the moment of creation.⁹ But although this preserved the integrity of the biblical language about

8. Augustine will maintain this basic concept of the eternal as the changeless (*City of God*, trans. D. Zema et. al. (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1950) XI, 6).

9. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, pp. 112-113.

the Father and the Son, it still related their reality to an "outside" perspective. The Son's begetting was not clearly distinguished from durational process. God was "pictured" as having an existence "prior" to creation when properly there was only God and not an eternal trinity, for the three persons were not distinct from all eternity but manifested only in the economy.¹⁰

Origen, however, insisted that the begetting of the Word itself was to be demarcated as an eternal begetting. The Word has existed eternally and was not begotten in any process with an outside purpose. Even though Origen appears to subordinate the Son to the Father in a way to be corrected in later Origenist circles of the 4th century (by Basil, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory Nazianzus), Origen nonetheless established the guiding principle of trinitarian theology by his insistence upon the eternal as the true modality of the Son/Logos relation to the Father.¹¹

By construing the relation between Father and Son through the theorem of the eternal, Origen provided the rationale by which the divine reality of the Son could be delineated (as belonging to the eternal) and the humanity of the Christ could also maintain its integrity (as belonging to our world of change and created being). It is through this theorem by which divine and created order are related that the Son or Logos is no longer capable of being presented as some sort of "fluid" personality which somehow manifests a continuum between this world and heaven. Such was the underlying viewpoint which would later on appear as the Arian reaction to Origen's trinitarian theology. Although the Arians are to be located in an Origenistic milieu, they rejected Origen's "eternally begotten" and all that it implied for the status of the Son. It was the openness to "plurality" in God which was most offensive to them.¹² Origen's central purpose, however, from the context of his own situation, was to co-relate the "Son" with the "Father" maintaining their mutual distinction as well as an overarching distinction between the theological datum of "God," known only from his deeds and effects, and theological datum of "creation," God's effect "for us," yet utterly other than God. Using the Alexandrine Platonic framework, Origen achieved a coherent structure for their co-relation. The theorem of the eternal provided

10. Kelly, p. 129. Augustine, of course, will confront and answer the question of what God was doing "before" he made heaven and earth by means of the canon of eternity. He discerns that there could be no "then" when there was no time. *Confessions*, trans. V. Bourke (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1953), XI, 12(14)-14(17); *City of God*, XI, 5, 6.

11. Whether Origen did or did not improperly subordinate the Son to the Father is disputed. See Kelly, p. 130.

12. For the context of Arius see Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 231.

the girding for this structure. As with the Lorentz transformation, it did not create either a new world or a new God but allowed a formulation of their inter-relation. It secured the validity of a line of reference termed creation which now achieved an independent significance, for it was the point of co-relation for two modal apprehensions: that of the transcendent and that of the immanent. Without this theorem, the transcendent and the immanent are usually treated as if they were "layers" of reality. They lose their modal quality as referents to the way creation is constituted through the theorem not as an impartation or fluid outpouring of the divine but as a distinct frame of reference. Augustine's philosophy of history expounded in the *City of God* is an attempt to secure the significance of creation as a principle of interpreting the significance of our temporal existence.

So much is the theorem of the eternal accepted as the "common sense" view of transcendence, it is difficult to recapture the pain and the hesitancy with which it was integrated into Christian language about God. It is not, after all, the biblical image of the (durational) ages of ages or everlasting that is meant. It is outside the framework of the general biblical viewpoint, except perhaps for the Johannine texts. It is still not accepted by those who view the elaboration of trinitarian theology as an unnecessary addition to the "simple" faith of or a simple faith in Jesus of Nazareth. (Because they usually have absorbed the notion of the eternal, however, their attempts at recovering the original faith are curiously complex and loaded with suppressed Christological assumptions). Yet the theorem was developed not as a venture in abstraction or formalization but because of an incoherence between the unity of God and the "threeness" of Christian experience of the divine as mediated in the symbols God the Father, Son/Logos and Spirit. The 2nd century had been spent in defending God the Father as a Christian symbol and the symbol of creation as an appropriate testimony of God's goodness and love. Yet when this defence had been achieved over against those (the gnostics) who had *opposed* the Son, the Logos, to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the task still remained of making coherent their unity and the intelligibility of making a distinction between them. It is ridiculous to talk of a "hellenization" of Christian life, as if Christian thought perversely turned to philosophical subtlety instead of Semitic straight-forwardness. Rather those in the Christian community who appreciated the significance of the past debate over Christian allegiance to the God of creation, to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, had to face new questions about the coherence of the tradition and the authority of its teaching. They discussed the religion of Jesus Christ and knew it could only be accepted through

the symbols they had inherited to express it, namely that of God the Father, the Son/Logos and the Holy Spirit. These were the symbols which communicated their experience of God's purpose and saving work in and for this world. To evacuate the meaning of any one of these symbols to collapse them into each other, to omit one by sheer inattention proved to create more incoherence than the resolution to seek and maintain their independence yet relatedness. It is Origen's achievement that through his aligning these symbols within an understanding of the eternal as utterly distinct from any process of change (the world of change, the temporal, being qualitatively different from the eternal) that a solution could be found. The solution did not ultimately "explain" the symbols either: it could only insist on the pattern of their coherence and on the necessity of holding to all of them. (Credo= I hold to with my heart Father, Son, Holy Spirit)

But a price was paid and we today must reflect on its cost and possible mitigation. The familiarity, the "solidarity" with us of the Son as the Logos or Word communicating to us the Father's transcendent will was now tempered. The insistence upon the Word as eternally begotten ran counter to the "emotional" impact of the hitherto usual explanation of the Word precisely as the agency of God in creation. The Son of God was aligned now with the Father rather than with the consequent creation. The Son was begotten not for the sake of creation (such was the older sentiment) but creation itself is fully an "other" to the begotten Son. In other words, creation's coming to be is to be assigned to the Word not as though the Word were a more "accessible" agency of God somehow "closer" to creation but to an (eternally) free act of God the Father through his (eternal) Word, both remaining utterly transcendent, the community of being called creation being only a participation in, not an impartation of, the divine life.

Such formulation ran counter to previous piety which indeed saw the Son as our "access" to God and God's "access" to creation. Origen's language appeared modalist to the unreasoning conservatives. Arius' attack upon the formulation of the "eternally begotten" was in fact reactionary. As Kelly points out, the Arian dispute was not about the unity of the Godhead as such. It was rather a dispute about the Son's co-eternity with the Father, about his full divinity.¹³ The designation of the Son as creature by the Arians was provoked by Origen's language of eternity. The earlier looseness of language about the Word which could interpret him as an "intermediate" being between God and the creation was now impossible. The issue had been forced to hard choices.

13. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 236.

Arius's willingness to speak of the Word as having a divine status in a "conferred" sense revealed only how he failed to understand the issue. Arius also held the Alexandrine view that the Word performed the rational operations of the person of Christ so his view of Christ as a composite creature was complete.

The accomplishment of the 4th century still represents one of the great achievements of the human spirit. It achieved an integrated pattern or code which both unified and yet respected the inner distinction of the hitherto loosely connected symbols of the Christian experience of God's presence to creation, namely, Father, Son/Logos and Holy Spirit. This achievement is best understood not as developing doctrine but as delineating a structure in which the Christian experience of God could retain the distinctiveness of its symbols and yet the definitiveness of their coherence. It is true we speak of the "doctrine" of the Trinity but the Trinity is itself an integrative symbol of the core symbols of the pattern of the Christian encounter with God's self-giving and presence. In this sense, we do not believe in the Trinity as an abstraction (the Nicene Creed does not ask us to believe in the term as such) but in the self-revelation of God as one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is my contention that the "theorem of the eternal" provided the conceptual power for this achievement. As a theorem it did not add new data to the theological data of God and creation, of God as communicated in a threefold pattern of Father, Son and Holy, but explicated a coherent inter-relationship for these foundational terms.

It is important to note that the theorem of the eternal does not give us access to the "inner reality" of the eternal any more than the theory of relativity gives us access to the "inner reality" of time. Just as we can only grasp what time is in its relationship with space as shaped by gravitational fields whose matter is inherently implicated in that shape, so eternity is an expression of the reality of a *relationship*. One does not "believe in" the eternal any more than one "believes in" time. Rather, they are polarities, even though logically they cannot be directly ontologically proportional. (How they can be contrued as proportional is precisely the problem which the theorem of the supernatural addresses). Hence Athanasius explicated the *homoousios* in and through the language of salvation. The presence to us of the eternal in the Word made flesh was to direct us to our own deification, a culmination of our creaturely existence in a restored participation in the eternal.¹⁴ Deification is the full restoration of a relationship. The "eternal"

14. Athanasius, *The Incarnation of the Word of God*, in *A Theology of Christ: Sources* ed. V. Zamoyta (N.Y.: Bruce, 1967), pp. 33-35.

signifies the unconditioned attainment of that relationship. The 4th century trinitarian controversy was content to delineate only that the Word must be understood as belonging to the "eternal" polarity of the relationship, once Origen's distinction between the eternal and the temporal became accepted as the principle for rendering the relationship between Father and Son/Logos coherent. It is our misfortune that we are fixated on the abstractions defined by the relationship (the Trinity as the abstract doctrine *about* the relationship) rather than on the relationship which gives life to the abstraction. I will argue as the final part of this essay that the attempt to recover the primacy of the relational is the contemporary quest, a quest which may be characterized as the search for the third theorem, the theorem of the relational.

Origen's speculative orientation was Platonic and the theorem of the eternal is basically the Platonic philosophy's most profound and determinative contribution to Christianity.¹⁵ It imparts the Platonic priority of the unseen, the unchanging, the "beyond being" of the One to Christian theology. It is properly speaking an "ontological" theorem because it addresses the modality of the being of God as eternal. It is also a theorem of "personality," relating the Father to the Son. The second theorem, in contrast, is a gift of the Aristotelean philosophy. Its purpose is to delineate not a sphere of "being" (*ousia*) beyond the world of change but rather the dynamic connection between two realms of being. It is hence an "existentialist" theorem in that it is directed to the process of being rather than to the quality of being as such (eternal vs. temporal).

S.T. Coleridge made the distinction he discerned between the Platonic and Aristotelean philosophy a means of characterizing the general scheme of Western philosophy.¹⁶ Perhaps the distinction is sweeping but it is suggestive. Coleridge designated the Platonic philosophy as the "I am" philosophy. Plato's philosophy addresses itself to the reality of the person who begins with an

15. As I have indicated, some would seek to undo this contribution, rejecting it as a betrayal of "scriptural" faith. But the problem is to make one's "purification" not arbitrarily selective (the old word was heretical). Even one's appreciation of the Semitic "substratum" is mediated through the medium of Platonic values. Can one jump away from one's shadow? It is my contention that the contribution explicates and co-ordinates the previously disjointed symbols of Father, Son/Logos and Spirit rather than subverts them. The question of a "pure" return to the historical Jesus begs the very question of why that return should be of any significance. Its significance is bestowed by the later Christology.

16. See Coleridge's *Table Talk* and for a discussion see Thomas McFarland, *Cambridge and the Pantheist Tradition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969) pp. 59ff.

awareness of his or her being as the foundational truth which determines all other truth. It is the knower looking "outward." The knower perceives ultimately that his or her knowing implicates our being in a realm of unconditioned being, even being beyond being. The "I am" of the knower is usually affirmed by the very act of knowing. The "eternal I am" is approached not through analogy but through the implications and logic of knowing itself. Hence it is "ontological" by deducing the inner referents of the act of knowing. The focus is not on the "being" as such in congruence/analogy with our being but with the disjunction of being which is overcome by the knowing. In this sense the Platonic tradition is ready to speak of God as "beyond" being. Into this class of philosopher Coleridge places Plato, Descartes, Leibniz, Kant and all those who are ultimately critics of empiricism and what he calls "pantheism."¹⁷

The Aristotelean orientation, however, begins not with the truth of "I am" but with the truth of "it is." The Aristotelean orientation, almost in self-forgetfulness, perceives primarily the existing reality as intriguing and significant, the only possible source of truth. Personal existence is apprehended as a function of this existing reality, the "it is," in direct polarization to the "I am" position which makes existing reality somehow a project of the personal realization of the knower. Aristotle, Locke, and the major traditions of empiricism along with the "pantheist" tradition represented by Schelling, Hegel and Spinoza comprise this class.¹⁸

Coleridge made this distinction as a way of typing two classes of human beings. As such, it does serve to illuminate a predominating polarity in Western thought. It is not, I believe, meant to be taken as dogmatic pronouncement but as a point of departure, suggestive and helpful for investigating patterns in the tradition. It is heuristic. One may finally criticize it as shallow or simplistic, but one still has used it to broach the complexity of the data. In this sense it is helpful for increasing our understanding of the difference between the first and second theorem of our discussion.

The second theorem, the theorem of the supernatural/natural, is Aristotelean because its orientation, its beginning ground, is the "it is" of reality. It was, in fact, developed out of Aristotle's challenge to the (Platonic) mediaeval order. Aristotle's thought, introduced through the Arabic culture, caused a grave crisis in the intellectual order of Christendom as achieved by the Western church. This order depended on Augustine's magnificent emphasis on the priority of faith and grace, an emphasis which still did

17. McFarland, p. 59.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

not exclude a profound debt to Plato as transmitted by the neo-Platonists. In some ways it could be argued that Augustine used the gospel to purify neo-Platonism of its Aristotelean taint, restoring this philosophy to its foundational vision of the transcendent through the truth of the gospel.¹⁹ The gospel provided the critical energy for this purification because it was the gospel's presentation of the incarnation which allowed a clear distinction between the divine order and the order of creation without either confusing the two (as did the neo-Platonists with their emanations) or rejecting one as evil (as did the Gnostics and Manicheans.) And it must be repeated Origen's theorem of the eternal, itself Platonic, had provided an intelligible framework for the gospel's defence in the onslaughts of the 3rd and 4th centuries. Augustine inherited the trinitarian resolutions as achieved by the east but he felt them still conceptually deficient. His work, *On the Trinity*, examines the trinitarian mystery through a conviction both of the reality of the eternal and of the integrity of the created order manifested both in human psychology and history.²⁰ Because Augustine respects both realms of order so thoroughly, his work has had the power to determine the intellectual structure of Western Christianity henceforth.

But Aristotle had risen. Up until the 11th century, the West had depended on Augustine's achievement but the strength of this achievement lay in its allegiance to Plato "undefiled" rather than a direct confrontation with Aristotle and his discomfiting dissent from his teacher. Aristotle now had to be taken seriously in the integrity of his own thought, not as a "contamination" of the Platonic vision of the One. Rather, Aristotle had arrived at significant insights about the "it is" of reality without the illumination of faith, without the grace of the eternal. Attention now had to be paid not to the structure of the eternal as over against our world but to the structure of existence as encompassing both "what is" eternally and "what is" conditionally. The 12th and 13th century were schooled anew by Aristotle.

In trinitarian language, the theorem of the eternal is a theorem which relates to the Father as the eternal One and the Word as eternally begotten of that eternity. It is a "father" theorem because it relates to origin (pun intended). The theorem of the supernatural, however, "Aristotle's theorem," the second theorem, is a Son theorem, a Christological theorem as opposed to a trinitarian the-

19. McFarland, *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition*, remarks that Plotinus subsumed Plato into "an elegantly co-ordinated anti-Platonist pantheism" p. 91.

20. H. Chadwick, *Augustine*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 91.

orem, in that it relates the eternal and the created as a dynamic proportionality. It addresses not origin but process. The focus is not on the foundation of the dynamism (between the eternal and the changeable) but on the dynamism itself (how the eternal is related to an order [the natural] which as natural possess a finality ordered to the eternal but as a finite good to an infinite good and as a changeable and conditioned to the unchanging and unconditioned.)

These two theorems, as elaborated in their respective periods of history, have determined the formal structure of Western Christianity. They exist in tension with each other, the perennial tension between the Platonic and Aristotelean visions, and this tension is one of the sources of intellectual irresolution and diremption in the West.²¹ Their resolution and reconciliation has been lived out rather than thought out within Western Christianity and ecclesial structures often reflect preferences for either one or the other theorem as the predominant. Coleridge presented the two philosophies as polar determinants, but Christianity has made use of both. Having been incorporated into our tradition in such thorough fashion, they present a problem of resolution for us who must live by their legacy. Their formulation has determined the formal structure of Christianity and like all "classical" structures, formal Christianity is granted a certain normative quality in its claim to represent Christianity. But here there is a two-fold problem. First the "internal" formal structure based on the two theorems requires reconciliation, and, even more devastatingly, the very normative quality of any structure is now in question. Even if a grand synthesis were shown to be implicit in the shape of classical Christianity, why should Christianity claim to be normative? What is the nature of a normative claim in a historically conscious society which knows that there are many competing normative claims made by religious traditions?

The need to resolve this problem has led to the formation of a third theorem, a theorem which informs contemporary thought. Its point of departure is, of course, Kant's critical examination of formally normative metaphysical arguments which now can no longer claim credibility on the grounds of their logical consistency

21. Protestantism may be interpreted as holding that the second theorem is a betrayal of the first. The Protestant reaction against the Aristotelean orientation of the second theorem has influenced its attitude to philosophy as an aspect of Christian life. Even with the Trinity, the Protestant tradition, in its suspicion of "philosophy," is happier with the faith which displaces any theoretical structure, even and especially nowadays the Platonic. Therefore it is always predisposed to return to the faith of Jesus or of the Apostles.

alone. Kant determined that any normative claim could be argued coherently, but if it lacks any referent to empirical reality, we can never judge its validity. But Kant did not put an end to the search for normative value: he merely made the search heed certain requirements. We will not discuss Kant's particular resolution of the problem through his evaluation of "practical reason" or the resolution(s) of those who followed him. Here I merely wish to assert that from all these efforts a theorem has emerged which takes into account the force of the Kantian appraisal of reason. To make the theorem understandable in its context I will examine briefly the questions which led to the formulation of this theorem in the light of our discussion of the first two theorems. From this discussion I hope to establish the operational force of this theorem for contemporary thought. But my ultimate purpose is not so much to establish that the theorem exists and is at work. That I assume will be granted once I describe its features. My real purpose is more to ask what its operational force implies for theology, because although the theorem is operative, its implications are not fully realized.

To introduce our discussion of the third theorem it will be useful, even methodologically necessary, to review our progress so far in establishing the concept of the first and second theorems. For our very exercise in identifying a Platonic and Aristotelean polarity, even if in a suggestive rather than dogmatic sense, reveals something about the medium of this essay itself. (The accuracy of analysis becomes almost beside the point.) For the essay is "using" Plato and Aristotle in a way not envisioned or even intended by these thinkers themselves. The essay is an attempt itself (like all contemporary essays, good or bad) in the relational: its purpose is to orientate conflicting polarities in a relation so that the relationship itself will confer coherence on what, if merely placed side by side, remains in conflict and without resolution. Whether or not Plato and Aristotle are true dichotomies is, as I say, almost beside the point. The point is that we (as members of our era) take what we discern to be dichotomies and seek an encompassing relationship which itself does not extinguish their independence but sublates them into a new context of meaning.²² Thus I would argue that Coleridge's use of Plato and Aristotle as a typology is more interesting because it displays him to be a contemporary thinker. He has recognized that the formalism of the first two theorems must find another context of expression if their truth is to be preserved and at the same time made to live.

22. The background of sublation is, of course, Hegelian, but Lonergan and others modify its "negativity."

From this perspective, let us look again at what the theorems of Christian theology were trying to do. The first theorem, the theorem of the eternal, was developed to distinguish between what is God and what is not God. Hence the real struggle against pantheism is to be located in this era of our development, and Coleridge and his contemporaries' accusations against the Idealists are really anachronistic. The first theorem, through its clear co-ordination of the eternal from the changeable, allowed the Fathers to maintain a clear distinction between the divine and created orders.

The second theorem had to be used to distinguish between what is grace and what is not grace. Augustine's view that faith was illumination of a darkened intellect and healing of our damaged will left everything within the realm of grace so that there could be no good thing without it. But what then was not grace? To establish a coherence the 13th century developed what Lonergan has said is the theorem of the supernatural. It enabled us to distinguish between what is holy and what is just ordinary, both very precious aspects of human life.

And what is our dilemma? What has led to the third theorem? It can be formulated in many ways (which fact itself is indicative of the dilemma.) Put most broadly, it is our particular struggle to distinguish between what is order and what is chaos. How are we to order what history has delivered to us, given that we know our very principles of ordering are bound up with structures and forms of consciousness which are themselves historically shaped and transmitted? Put in theological language, it is the difficulty of distinguishing between what is of the Spirit and what is not of the Spirit, and why there should be any need to make a distinction. In ethical language it is the struggle to understand the difference between good and evil in view of the realization that normative values have emerged out of relative contexts.

What does that mean? One example. Coleridge's talk of Plato and Aristotle is one example of contemporary awareness that our views on life, even our deepest convictions about truth, are historically transmitted. Are they then merely "accidents?" Is there any meaning left in being a Platonist or an Aristotelean? Or are we all consigned to being products of particular formulations which may organize our approach to truth but now cannot claim to impart it? As you see, a door to chaos has been opened, because one aspect of history is its multitude of particularities, some of which we call "significant" and others "meaningless," but all of which may mean nothing at all. Can history deliver the goods about its own meaning? Not bloody likely. But at the same time, the only meaning we will ever get is imparted through history. Weird (in the strict sense of the word.) The third theorem must simultane-

ously broach the distinction while defining and maintaining the relationship between historical flux and intentionalized meaning.

Another example is our awareness of the relatively of culture. Lonergan points out that culture used to be defined normatively so that one's culture was the standard for human existence. Such was "classical" culture. Those outside were barbarians who had no claim to normative value. But since the growth of historical consciousness we are aware that many cultures all adopted the identical viewpoint. Through this historical consciousness we are able to relativize human cultures, even our own.²³ Lonergan employed this analysis to defend the truth of dogma from relativism in his Père Marquette lectures on *Doctrinal Pluralism*. Here I merely want to draw attention to the issue, apart from the question of whether Lonergan resolves it successfully. If we no longer have a culture we consider normative in the classical sense, and if all forms of religious faith are transmitted culturally, then can any faith cling to its normative claims? And if the purpose of the claim is precisely to ward off chaos, are we not allowing it to seep back in like a miasma?

A third example of the new encounter with chaos is through the challenge to the myth of origins on which most religious traditions depend to make sense out of our beginnings. The challenge is mounted by evolutionary theory, and the most devastating aspect of the challenge I believe is not that it upsets the "timetable" of the created order but that it casts into question the priority of consciousness over the unconscious. The story of Genesis, for example, assures us that there were conscious observers of the creation right at the beginning of things. Some one was around to take notice. And the story explains that the disorientations of existence come from a "lack of due attention" on the part of the first observers. But now we have another story. It now appears that there were vast eras of silence in our created order where that consciousness to which we have access did not exist. And if, as it now appears to be shown, savagery and the relentless struggle for life (not usually considered aspects of paradise) were inherent to the pre-human era, it is hard to see how we can fix the blame for them on human agency. It now seems we have to invest the pre-human era with aspects of order or disorder and that places us in a radically new orientation to the question of our origins. The myths of origin universally tell us that there was some struggle, some conflict of will and intention either on the part of gods or humans, involved in the origin of our world. But now how do

23. B. Lonergan, *Doctrinal Pluralism*, (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1971), pp. 4-12.

we attribute any intentionality to a process which had no one to "check up" on how it was going. It is not enough to say God was conscious of it all because God as a symbol is inextricably bound up with and only "evident" as an aspect of the very intentionality in question.²⁴

My purpose here is not to discuss evolutionary theory as such but to use it as a final example of the new problematic of order and chaos which confronts us. Once we know that Plato and Aristotle are significant only within a restricted context, once we know that our culture which claims to confer meaning on our human life is similarly restricted, and now that we can no longer claim that our agency is totally determinative of the order of the cosmos, we must re-think our relationship to it all once more. Evolutionary theory is particularly significant theologically for this re-thinking in that it challenges a fateful decision of the 2nd century Christian community about the goodness of the created order as opposed to the defectiveness of the human will. The church's struggle in the 2nd century was to defend the goodness of the creation over against the gnostics who located the defects of existence in the

24. The problem of attributing intentionality to the evolutionary developments always arises (sometimes amusingly) in accounts of the origin of species. The authors often refer to the developments as if they were intentional decisions on the part of the organisms involved. The reason for this style is the intentional nature of language itself. When we interpret the fossil record in the medium of language, we are encompassing these life-forms in a medium in which they themselves did not exist and yet are only approachable through it. In a real sense they can't exist without our perception of them. Hence the process, although conceived of as an impersonal process of selective pressure on life forms as they occupy various "eco-niches," takes on an animate quality. See for example especially the popular accounts of evolution such as John C. McLoughlin *Synapsida: A New Look into the Origin of Mammals*, (New York: Viking, 1980), p. 77: "In our small insectivorous models, some provision had to be made for simultaneous breathing and chewing, lest they strangle on their dinners. Provision [of a hard palate] was made, among small theroccephalians and small relatives of gorgonopsians, and yet another synapsid revolution took place." Also we find on p. 109: "As the subtlety of landlubbing increased, synapsids continued for a time to keep their jaws to the ground in hopes of picking up noise." (A hopeful synapsid?) The language is meant to confer vividness on the text but the underlying question of purpose for the "selective pressure" is never asked because such questions are assumed to be excluded from the data. Yet the language conveys purpose in its very semantics: "So, selective pressure arose again(!) to force therapsids — probably the small, insectivorous models in particular — to augment parental egg-tending with some sort of parental feeding of the young." (p. 117 Italics and exclamation mine). For an excellent treatment which examines the problem of introjecting values into the fossil record see Emile Guyénot, *The Origin of Species*, trans. C.J. Cameron (N.Y.: Walker and Co., 1964), pp. 50-62.

deficiencies of the demiurge or "lesser god" who was responsible for the deficiencies of our world. The gnostic attributed the disorder of existence to the ineptness of the god who created material existence. The Christian community, remaining faithful to the biblical tradition of the creation of the material universe as good, defended the goodness of the creator's purpose by locating defect of purpose in human agency. It is Irenaeus who first develops the first doctrine of sin as an instrumental factor in the Incarnation of Christ who recapitulates in himself the history of human action and undoes its distorting effects.²⁵ This doctrine, re-enforced with Augustine's introspective philosophy of history, has located the source of evil, spiritual and material, in the disordered affections of human volition.

But are now the gnostics to have the last laugh? (Not that they should laugh, because that is a crassly material thing to do.) The Edenic aspect of earthly life has existed but only until different new ecological levels have become replete with life and then the competition to hold a place in that level begins as members of one species specialize into hunter and prey. Savagery is built into the works. Again perhaps the most important things about this new picture is its challenge to our conviction that it is human being's conscious agency that has distorted this world. Our whole (Western) symbolic organization of life, our morality and religious symbols, now rest largely upon this assumption.

So we're back at order and chaos. How do we attain a principle of order which is not ultimately open to subversion, i.e. open to the annihilating power of chaos. Such is the obsession and nightmare of our era. Hegel's famous observation was that the question of how we are to know anything already implies a knowing. Similarly the question of order itself is already an ordering. It is this insight which has shaped post-Kantian philosophy. Let us examine the implications for our argument.

Can we find a principle of order such that any final incursion of chaos is excluded? Based upon the premiss that the question of order already presupposes an ordering, the choice has fallen upon dialectic as the modality of that principle. If we can construe order and chaos in a dialectic way, then chaos finally will be excluded, for the dialectic preserves a pattern of order which chaos ultimately cannot subvert. It is subsumed into the dialectic.

But whatever dialectic is, it is not a "straightforward" recipe for reconciliation of intractable opposites. It is not "out there" like a plumber's wrench to twist things together that otherwise would

25. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, in *Readings in Christian Thought*, ed. H.T. Kerr (Nashville: Abingdon, 1966) pp. 28-36.

not fit. For how can any relation be established mechanically between something which has relation (order) and that which by definition is the lack of all order or its absolute fluidity (chaos). What *is* there for dialectic to relate? The only "positive" point of contact is their *logical* polarity. They are connected by being logical opposites. Logic is the connecting continuum. There is no "real" polarity as if there were of mountain of order somewhere and a mountain of chaos somewhere else. Hence human intentionality possesses more than mere technical significance in the dialectic achievement of order. It is the medium of its achievement and existence.

Human intentionality must therefore be our focus of attention if we wish to achieve an understanding of the dialectic between order and chaos, for although order and chaos are mutually exclusive, they are only mutually exclusive as defined by human intention. We cannot point to any absolute order or absolute chaos "out there." The real pitfall with dialectic is that it can be perilously abstract. We can bandy concepts about as if they refer to absolute entities. But for the human perceiver, order and chaos are always relative terms: no one experiences absolute order or utter chaos, but they exist mysteriously on some sort of "logical" continuum and it is the nature of the continuum which the third theorem must formulate.

Put another way, order and chaos (and being and nothing) are extrapolations. We extrapolate complete patterns (or lack of them) from partial patterns or disrangements. And it is in the medium of these extrapolations that our consciousness is constituted and its patterns of order achieved. And because its patterning is always "dialectical" that is "achieved in the medium of mental or logical interchange=conversation" it is open to an awareness that it is patterning, that is, it is capable of self-consciousness.²⁶

It is our lot to be born in the middle of things, not at the beginning and hopefully not at the end. We have awakened when the show is half over and we have missed the first scenes. We try to reconstruct them from the plot which is now unfolding but it's guess work and we can only give it half our attention because we don't want to miss what's happening now. But what of the third theorem? Now we can see the issue it must address. It must pos-

26. Such I hope is not a distortion of Hegel's account of reason's. We already exist before we become aware and our awareness presupposes that we exist. Our vanity would have preferred them to be simultaneous, but alas that itself is an extrapolation of the possible co-relation of two modes of being, being that is aware and being is that is not aware. And here we are back at the history of the earth and our personal recapitulation of its progression of awareness.

tulate that the "dialectical" opposites do not exist in themselves but "comprehended" by our consciousness. Don't look for chaos or order "out there." (Now don't start yelling "Idealism." No one's denying that there's real "stuff" there.) But "order" and "chaos" aren't perking there all by themselves. Their "real" existence takes our knowing to constitute them. Therefore reality is a relational process or "event" between knower and known.

Third theorem: reality is mediated through relationship;

Corollaries: opposites such as order and chaos
are related in the consciousness;

the mode of the relation is dialectical.

order is the (conscious, coherent) apprehension
of relationship.

Because order is a function of consciousness which is constituted by the relational, I call this theorem a theorem of the relational rather than a theorem of order.

Just as the theorem of the supernatural did not invent either grace or nature, so the theorem of the relational does not invent relationship. (After all, the theorem of the supernatural functions through the relational mode of analogical proportionality.) The theorem rather establishes a line of reference (history or "the historical *order*") which embodies the mediated quality of reality. It shifts our attention to what relationship is. Its dynamic mode therefore is dialectical sublation rather than analogical proportionality (second theorem) or *theoria*, intellectual vision or contemplation (first theorem.)

This third theorem, whether seen as way of relating order and chaos or the relative origins of the first and second theorems, now provides, I believe, the framework and context for post-Kantian thought. I suggest that many varieties of contemporary theology reflect its influence and even determining power. As I have stated, my purpose in this short survey is not so much to provide the definitive proof of its influence as such. I feel its determining power can be established convincingly enough in a brief overview of contemporary theology, an overview I will proceed to give. My ultimate purpose and point of the paper, however, is to point out what this third theorem, taken along with its other two predecessors, must mean for the way theology is to be done.

As I have said, a brief review of the way the third theorem is foundational for contemporary theology must suffice for the purposes of this paper. Quite simply, the influence of the theorem is shown in the way contemporary theology locates the question

of God within the structures of the human consciousness, particularly the level of the human knower or subject's responsible self-consciousness rather than in the defence of an externalized teleology.²⁷ Contemporary theology can be characterized as a quest for order in that no order can be accepted *a priori* and consequently all contemporary theology is inherently "political" theology in that it must rely on the commonality of consciousness to develop its norms rather than on what are now recognized to be externalized projections of that very consciousness.

A few specific instances can illustrate this point. It is easy to identify the influence of this theorem on those who are open to the Hegelian orientation, namely Pannenberg Moltmann, and Metz. Their theological work takes its point of departure from the enlightenment, even if in critical attitude towards it. Pannenberg's insistence that revelation is a mediated experience; Moltmann's trinitarian theophany; and Metz's establishment of the true autonomy of the subject all depend on the dialectical mode of participating in divine and human reality. Discourse about the revealing power of God in the creation is mediated through human consciousness not in a direct fashion but through the very polarities which constitute this consciousness as aware of both the limited and the unlimited horizon of existence.²⁸

Both Pannenberg and Moltmann work in reaction to Karl Barth and so it may be surprising to include him as an example of the determinative effect of the third theorem. Yet Barth worked in the post World War I framework of "dialectical theology" and his insistence on the "wholly other" made him discern faith as the commonality of consciousness which must be the foundation of human community. Now this way of understanding faith is possible only under the authority of the third theorem, for now its function as

27. Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, (N.Y.: Herder and Herder, 1972), puts it succinctly: "In the measure that we advert to our own questioning and proceed to question it, there arises the question of God" (p. 103) and "As the question of God" is implicit in all our questioning, so being in love with God is the basic fulfilment of our conscious intentionality." (p. 105).

28. Illustrative works: W. Pannenberg in association with Rolf Rendtorff, Trutz Rendtorff, and Ulrich Wilens, *Revelation as History*, trans. David Granskou (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1968) and *Theology and the Philosophy of Science* trans. F. McDonagh (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* trans. J. Leitch (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, 1967), *The Crucified God*, trans. R.A. Wilson and J. Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1974) and *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* trans. M. Kohl (New York: Harper and Row, 1977); Johannes Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology*, trans. David Smith (N.Y.: Seabury, 1980).

establishing order is "consciously" elaborated. Barth's insistence on the "analogy of faith" over against the Thomistic "analogy of being," even though it appears to choose Anselm (and Augustine) over Thomas, is perhaps a rejection of the second theorem in favour of the first, but the modality of the choice is within the concerns and framework of the third theorem, namely, how do we attain and verify a commonality of consciousness which goes beyond mere "religion," that is, mere cultural arrogance masquerading as "natural" theology. Only under the aegis of the third theorem does the previous morally neutral aspect of "cultural Christianity" or externalized religion become a positive delusion and snare (= sin).²⁹

I have already indicated that Bernard Lonergan is fully within the scope of the third theorem, particularly as he places the question of God and the level of responsible human action in the level of our self-consciousness as the integrating principle of all our levels of human being. In discussing his "dialectic of method in metaphysics," moreover, Lonergan recognizes his debt to "Hegel's inspiration" and specifically lists the differences between his notion and the Hegelian form. In Lonergan's view, Hegel's form is "conceptualist, closed, necessitarian and immanent." Lonergan's position is "intellectualist, open, factual and normative." Lonergan's method of dialectic works not from a framework where concepts have the determinative function, their opposition and sublation being a necessary "moments" of their wholeness, but from a framework of "heuristically defined anticipations" which seeks to discriminate between advance and aberration within the human cognitional process.³⁰

Lonergan notes that Hegel solved the troubling question of the reality of the external world (whose objectivity Kant retained) by making the extroverted consciousness which is the apprehension of the external objective world into an elementary stage of spirit's self-realization. Lonergan, however, sees no need to philosophically justify our experience of objectivity for he approaches both the knower (*res cogitans*) and what is there to be known (*res extensa*) as real but philosophically irrelevant. What is relevant is

29. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: A Selection* (N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1961), pp. 38-65. See also *Karl Barth and Radical Politics*, ed. and trans. G. Hunsinger, (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), p. 219.

30. Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Harper and Row 1978) pp. 421-423. For a different appraisal of Hegel see Quentin Lauer, *A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1976. See also Jon Nilson, *Hegel's Phenomenology and Lonergan's Insight: A Comparison of Two Ways to Christianity* (Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain, 1971).

a thorough and precise account human knowing. Such an account identifies a drive of intelligent inquiry and critical reflection, a drive which he identifies with the notion of being. Metaphysics is the integral heuristic structure of this drive, that is, the integral heuristic structure of proportionate being.³¹

For Lonergan, then, dialectic is concerned with the structure and the aberrations of human cognitional process. The true position is that knowing is a dynamic structure which is comprised not of some single operation or activity but is a whole whose parts are cognitional activities. Because Lonergan works in the post-Kantian framework, he operates within the orientation of this third theorem. He does not reject the modality of dialectic but precisely his effort to establish it as a mode and not as a substantive principle by which reality necessarily unfolds (in Lonergan's view, the fault of Hegel) makes his work a profound development of this theorem. The third theorem postulates that the "real" aspect of order is constituted by our knowing about it in a relational way. The structures of our knowing then will be the central issue. Lonergan's work is impressive because all three theorems are operative in his thought. My purpose is to make their presence apparent.

Finally, although perhaps strange company for Lonergan, the feminist theologians work with the realization that the relationship between male and female is an order that is not given but to be accomplished. Such a project is unthinkable without the presupposition of the third theorem.

For the purpose of this paper I hope that this brief exposition will demonstrate that the third theorem is operative in contemporary theology. My major interest is to ask what its formulation as a third theorem implies for the structure of theology once we recognize its sway. For the very theorem challenges theology to become self-conscious about its methodology.

To understand the ramifications of this theorem, let us look at what this theorem does as a theorem. It allows us to situate the human perspective as an engagement in order through the modality of consciousness. But human consciousness or perspective is not the "primal agent" of the reality to be ordered. It's true there wouldn't be any order or disorder without us: but we discover as well that what we order and disorder is prior to our awareness of it. This discovery itself is achieved in our consciousness as it constitutes itself through relating itself to its own boundaries. Some things are permeable to thought and some aren't. It's that very perception which launches the adventure of mind.

31. B. Lonergan, "The Subject," *A Second Collection* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1974), p. 80; *Insight*, p. 431.

Our self-consciousness presupposes an "other" which cannot be totally encompassed. Otherwise our self would dissolve in the very apprehension of the other.

Hence it must be emphasized that the third theorem is a *third* theorem. It does not refer to primordial realities. Only when its proper referent is forgotten (namely consciousness) do we start talking nonsense of primordial chaos or primordial order. It's because we have forgotten that there is a first theorem, a theorem of origin, that we start making dialectical polarities into primordial states. The third theorem proceeds from the first. Order and chaos are not there at the beginning but are aspects or the created as it begins. The One is prior as the eternal. But then the Spirit broods over the deep. The second theorem tries to address the proportionality between what the Spirit achieves and what God is: its modality is analogy. The Spirit works *through* this proportionality, the proportionality ultimately of the divine love. But the third theorem addresses the unlikeness between what the Spirit achieves (the created order) and what God is: its modality is dialectic. The modality of the first theorem, apprehension of the One, is of course *theoria*, contemplation or intellectual vision. Hence contemplation, analogy and dialectic constitute a threefold apprehension of reality, an apprehension which is directed to a common reality, yet a reality which cannot be encompassed through any one mode of apprehension.³²

Hence I wish to suggest that the particular dynamism of the third theorem leads us to orient Christian theology within a trinitarian pattern. Since Christianity "invented" the Trinity this conclusion may seem otiose and tendentious. Yet the third theorem itself has called into question any acceptance of formal requirements in the formulation of truth. And at the same time the very dynamism of the third theorem disallows a unitary apprehension of reality. The paths of *theoria*, analogy and dialectic have been developed in response to crises in our philosophical and theological tradition, both intertwined more than either side is sometimes

32. Eric Voegelin in his series *Order and History* Vol. 1: *Israel and Revelation*, Vol. 2. *The World of the Polis*; Vol. 3: *Plato and Aristotle*; Vol 4: *The Ecumenic Age* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1956-74) achieves what I discern as a brilliant recovery of the first theorem and its significance for the problem of order. Because he identifies the trinitarian pattern with doctrinalization, however, he is not able to identify fully his own point of departure, namely, the problematic of the third theorem. Rather he tries to read the current problem of order within the framework of the first. Such a reading produces important insights, but it cannot account for its own self-conscious perspective on the problem of order. For the *Bios Theoretikos*, the life of contemplation, see *Plato and Aristotle*, pp. 304-314.

prepared to admit. The theorem of the relational is only properly employed in the context of the other two theorems. If not, then reality becomes a cross play of mutually opposing forces (somehow "out there") without orientation to any proportionality or eternal mystery. Because it has no ultimate justification, order becomes simply utilitarian and totalitarian. Order becomes the "absolute" bulwark against the forces of disorder and we then find ourselves in the dualistic world of the late twentieth century. Likewise, if one clings to the first or second exclusively, one excludes facets of reality whose suppressions leads to perverted reactions. If one restricts oneself to the theorem of the eternal one soon subverts the natural order of its significance. A tyranny of grace arises. Predestination as a fixation, if instituted socially, approaches such a condition. And if one pays attention only to the second theorem to the virtual exclusion of the first, one finds that proportionality develops into an ideology of natural law where the shadows and limited competency of ethical norms are ruthlessly excluded. Faith develops into the ideology of the inquisition. Dark imaginings are now the enemy and they are projected onto the hapless person accused of witchcraft.

Therefore Christian theology, if it is to be whole theology, must be trinitarian, that is, it must self-consciously maintain the dynamism of these three theorems. Does it thereby lose its openness to truth? Has a new formalism crept in? The trinitarian pattern is not a formal requirement but a structural requirement precisely so that there can be an escape from formalism. For the trinitarian pattern presents us with three theorems, no single one of which can exhaust all aspects of the truth but all of which must be remembered and respected.

Now it is all very well to lay down a prescription that Christian theology must be trinitarian, that is, always open to more than mere formalization of truth, but how can such a requirement actually be applied to theology as she is known? As a general principle one can say that the trinitarian pattern must not serve as a formal beginning but as an ending whereby the formulations achieved in any theological construct maintain an openness to the final mystery. The pattern serves as a way of relativizing beginnings so that the final theological formulation is seen as only one possible beginning point. For the end purpose of theology is to communicate the life of God and not the life of a theological construct, and because any construct can become an idol, an openness to the God who is must always be finally intimated and conveyed not just formally but in actual demonstration.

One pivotal example of contemporary theology will illustrate the function of the trinitarian pattern. Two dominant patterns are

manifested in contemporary theology as to their evaluation of the place of human community as an agency in God's revelation. One is represented by Bernard Lonergan who states basically that it is *after* conversion that we are open to a new community, a community which provides us our true social being. The starting point for the Christian life, however, is the person's first step in religious, moral and intellectual conversion. The other is represented by political theology whose representatives share the common premiss that it is in community that we achieve our stature as authentic subjects and attain to the Christian life. Here the ontological status of the saving community is conceived of as prior to the individual believer, for it is the medium of revelation imparted indirectly through history. For Lonergan, however, the community is constituted through the individual's having come directly into a relationship to God through falling in love in an unrestricted way.³³

From reading Lonergan one gains the impression that the basic act of trust in the goodness of God lies in trusting the very dynamism of our cognitional structures as they lead us to an dialectical unfolding of position and counterposition so that being as the object of the pure desire to know opens to us its final horizon of mystery. For the political theologians one gains the impression that our basic trust in the goodness of God lies in our trust that God has not deserted history but through it has brought us closer to the divine purpose and love. Those who suffer are the ones who truly bring history to its culminating purpose.

The political theologians who do not like Lonergan say that his theology is all in the mind. It has not social referent to validate its claim to truth. There is no test for the authenticity of one's object of love. How can one say one loves what is proper without comparing what others have loved and are loving? How can I differentiate between what is true worship and idolatry except socially: by their fruit you shall know them?

The followers of Lonergan who do not like the political theologians say that their theology is just a social experience and that it has no transcendental referent. One can talk of the indirectness of revelation through the medium of history all one wishes, but the fact is that those who compose that history all testified to an experience of the directness of God's presence in their lives. History wouldn't "get done" without this aspect of human attestation and consequent action.

33. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, pp. 85-107. The "further intelligibility" of the realm of transcendence is the fulfillment of our conscious intentionality. It is by this realm of faith and grace that human community is restored as a saving community.

Now here I would like to point out that these two positions are reminiscent of the "I am" and "it is" positions of Plato and Aristotle respectively. I am not saying they are just unadvanced repetitions of those alternatives, for both work, after all, in the light and guiding sway of the third theorem. But they do have emphases which are consonant with them. The relevance of this characterization can be illustrated more convincingly perhaps if we observe how Lonergan and the political theologians differ in their evaluation of the very contemporary notion of "intersubjectivity."³⁴ Lonergan has a very "low" notion of intersubjectivity: it is an orientation which provides important social referents at the beginning of one's path of understanding, but soon one must detach oneself from its common sense aphorisms if one is to advance to the level of systematic thinking. The political theologians, however, have a very "high" notion of intersubjectivity. It is the *final* level of human being, a level which provides both the locus of revelation and the goal of human psychological and spiritual development. It is not just that one becomes open finally to a new level of intersubjectivity after religious, moral and intellectual conversion: It is this level which is the condition of possibility for the conversion itself.³⁵

34. The very word "intersubjectivity" is a touchstone of the relative positions of Lonergan and the political theologians because it is a word engendered by the third theorem: it presupposes reality as a function of the relational. The word denotes what exists between conscious minds (*Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. 2, p. 345) and it has come into use in our century as a word much employed by social theorists. It is often used, however, without thought as to the questions it may pose about the significance of that which exists between conscious minds. Is the link between our consciousness merely formulaic and conventional or does the very link itself constitute us as individuals in our particular consciousness?

35. For Lonergan intersubjectivity is in the realm of the spontaneous and often narrow horizon of group perception. One achieves depth of understanding by leaving its confines. Specifically Christian love of God has an intersubjective interpersonal component but this aspect of the intersubjective is placed in the realm of faith and grace. It does not, as with the political theologians, serve as the medium by which faith and grace are communicated. For Lonergan on intersubjectivity see *Insight*, pp. 217ff., 631, *Doctrinal Pluralism*, p. 28. The political theologians share the "high" evaluation of intersubjectivity. J. B. Metz, for example, mediates dogma through the intersubjective spheres of memory, narration and solidarity to show in his political theology of the subject how human social existence is inherently connected with our apprehension of God's freeing action (*Faith in History and Society*, pp. 183-237.) Helmut Peukert in his *Wissenschaftstheorie-Handlungstheorie-Fundamentale Theologie* (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1976) attempts to demonstrate that a theory of communicative action is the point of convergence for theology on the one hand and philosophy of science on the other. See also Habermas'

"Towards a Theory of Communicative Competence," *Inquiry*, 13, (December 1970) 360-375. J. Moltmann in his three works *Theology of Hope*, *The Crucified God* and *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* seeks to re-introduce into theology a fundamental social and political dimension. W. Pannenberg, *Revelation as History*, pp. 136-138 argues that our access to revelation is not through a supplement to reason but through reason's own transformation (self-constitution) through events. In his view of theology as the science of God, Pannenberg states that theology must first be a science of religion in that it examines the indirect self-communication of the divine reality. In other words, theology is prior to Christianity as a religion so that there can be an approach to and test of revelation that is accessible to all. In this sense there is an intersubjective bond by which humanity can appropriate God's (indirect) self-disclosure. Hence the political theologians are "political" because they see the divine-human order as grounded in the realm of intersubjectivity which is our access to and test of God's revelation (the Protestant pre-occupation) or else the grounding of a true human freedom (the Catholic pre-occupation.) For an obscure, but hopefully accurate, exposition of this polarity in contemporary theology see R. Darcus *The Persistence of Kant and Hegel as Theological Models: The Realm of Faith versus the Realm of Philosophy as the grounding for the Autonomy of the Human Subject* (Unpublished Ph.d. dissertation, Concordia University, Montreal, 1981.) Note that it is congruent with their views that Lonergan is impressive as an individual thinker and the political theologians are impressive as a group.

More recently in *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroads, 1981), David Tracy identifies differing constituencies or "publics" for theological work and hence recognizes an intersubjective constitutive factor in it. Tracy does not satisfactorily establish, however, a resolution to Pannenberg's problematic: how is theology as a discipline of study to be connected with the God who must never be an "object of study." Tracy's hermeneutical approach to the classical texts of Christianity attempts to mediate this dilemma but again the issue lies in the way a classical text is identified as such. How is the sentiment that we are face to face with something numinous made intelligible? He postulates the intersubjective context but does not explore the problematic quality of how we can discern, let alone establish, such a context. It is my contention that the "analogical" is not complete. It will find itself in tension with the dialectical way which will question the very directness of our approach to any such relational reality as an (intersubjective) "public." See Charles Davis, *What is Living, What is Dead in Christianity Today?* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986), pp 102-103.

The point of this paper is to suggest both the analogical and the dialectical must be understood not as two "options" but as moments in a trinitarian pattern. It is this pattern (not formula) whose methodological inclusiveness will provide a fundamental openness which may, as Davis hopes, ground a "mystical religion" that is "the spiritual form of the principle of freedom for a reconstruction of the Church." (Davis, *What is Living*, p. 103) Through its self-conscious insistence on the dialectical as well as the analogical proportionate, we may avoid either social withdrawal into religious privacy or its opposite, the lapse into a mere humanism or activism. Finally I must emphasize that it is not the trinitarian pattern as such that I am advocating as the priority but the methodological openness which I think the pattern maintains. It's just that I have not

Now what use could the trinitarian pattern serve in the above case? Simply that it would ask each formulation to review its relative position within the tradition. Its purpose is not to achieve the grand synthesis or impose a formality of its own. Rather it is to make us aware of the "construct" nature of each construct. If one merely tries to determine "which is right and which is wrong," one finds oneself necessarily adopting the starting assumptions of either position. So what we need to do is to look at those starting assumptions and evaluate what determining effect they exercise on the final formulation.

Put another way, both Lonergan and the political theologians would insist that their theological presentations are successful exercises in escaping the formalism of previous theology. I have mentioned above how both work under the sway of the third theorem in achieving this re-orientation of theology. But formalism cannot be escaped so directly as all that. It is an ever present possibility whereby what is opened can be closed (usually for purposes of teaching or defence).³⁶ If the third theorem is really to be effective as a theorem in any theological enterprise, it must retain its very relational quality as a critique of the formal. And it is within the context of the trinitarian pattern that the third theorem itself is "saved" from formalism.

Put still another way, we the innocent bystanders have been confronted with two theological formulations which wind up with different emphases, if not conclusions. We can either try to sort them out formally, or learning from the third theorem, pay attention to the very fact that we know about both and inquire after the vantage point from which we know about both, for our very vantage point implies they are somehow limited. It is the vantage point of the third theorem, of course, but here again the third theorem must be a third theorem and we must remember it does not introduce a new content of truth but a relation. Hence the third theorem cannot "squish" them into a reconciled statement of reality but can only be the means by which their inevitable limitations need not drive us to despair or cynicism. For each must necessarily be limited simply because each chose a particular (and therefore

discovered another methodological pattern of such "built-in" comprehensiveness once its formal doctrinalization is seen as secondary rather than as causative. Our attention must be given to the problematic of our own diversity yet unity of apprehension through what I have called the three theorems.

36. The question posed to us by the third theorem is whether now in its light we can have an "open" defence of a particular faith: such is the context of the inter-faith dialogue. Similarly a question is posed for pedagogy: how can teaching a discipline escape from its formalization?

necessarily incomplete) starting point and that starting point exercises a final determinative effect. So the third theorem cannot produce the ultimate version of the truth, the ultimate reconciliation for as long as we have to make a beginning somewhere, our ending will be circumscribed. The third theorem must preserve the first two if it is to perform its function, and its function is precisely to save us from madness, from the dry hell of reducing what is existentially varied to a formal uniformity.

If the third theorem can be said to have a content, it is only in the relational sense that its very existence implies the trinitarian pattern we have been discussing. And it is by this pattern that any theological construct can be what it is and still be at least methodologically open to another valid construct. (Coleridge may ultimately prove correct and there will only be two possible starting points for these constructs, but the question must remain open.) My argument here has been that both Lonergan and the political theologians represent two different constructs, that each has made definite choices and that each one's final apprehension may be illuminating even if not encompassing all the truth, that the problem is not so much to get to the construct which *can* encompass it all but to find a way of resisting that very temptation. Therefore the trinitarian pattern is essentially a corrective pattern, to be employed after the theological construct has been achieved precisely so that it can be saved from its own limitations.³⁷

One final concern: we have discussed the trinitarian pattern as a dynamic inter-relation of three foundational theorems. As such, it is very much accessible to human inquiry and discernment. The pattern is intellectually accessible. But what is the relation of this pattern to the "revealed" Trinity, to the life of God as revealed as not just modally three but as three hypostatic persons in substantial unity of will and power and eternity?

Here I wish to point out the trinitarian pattern, as comprised of the theorem of the eternal, the theorem of the supernatural and the theorem of the relation and as coming from human power and discernment, is a modal trinity. The theorems are inter-related as modes of human formulation. It is an "image" of the divine Trinity which informs human grasp of reality. It is a contemporary

37. Is a "grand" trinitarian theology possible which is not merely corrective? Because it would be the integration of deeply explored forms of consciousness and modes of apprehension, it would have to be a communal effort. Lonergan, I believe, has identified this need in his notion of the "functional specialities." The trinitarian pattern would provide the large context for these specialities. In the final sense, the whole trinitarian theology must be the whole human record, so we are all involved. It is at that stage that the intersubjective and the divine initiative will co-incide.

formulation of Augustine's trinitarian image in the individual soul of memory, intelligence and will or mind, knowledge and love.³⁸ It is contemporary in the sense that it is formulated not in terms of the individual soul but in terms of a history of human knowing.

But this modal trinitarian pattern requires a "real" trinitarian pattern for its final validity or else again the pattern itself is just one pattern amongst an indifferent choice of patterns and the god chaos triumphs at the very end. But how do we approach a "real" trinitarian pattern? Our problem is reversed from Augustine who began with the revealed Trinity and sought its image in the human soul. We are beginning with the (historically realized) image of the trinity and trying to approach the revealed Trinity. One way of approaching the problem is to do just what the trinitarian pattern suggests: we use the (modal) trinitarian pattern itself contemplatively, analogously and dialectically in apprehending the reality of its origin. For the pattern is in a way self-authenticating even if not self-demonstrative. For the pattern itself assures its own intelligibility: when the pattern is itself applied to itself as a pattern we find it cannot be utterly subverted for its subversion would presuppose the very principle by which its subversion would be effected. In other words, we could only attempt to dismiss the validity of contemplation, analogy and dialectic by means of contemplation analogy and dialectic. Here by no means have we grasped the "real" Trinity but we have been faced with a choice. Either we assume an absolute incoherence or we acknowledge the likelihood of a foundational reality. The foundational reality is likely only because the opposite assumption of absolute incoherence cannot utterly extinguish the minimal coherence of its assumption. We have been opened to the presence of mystery wherein by our definition the "real" Trinity would be a super-abundance of coherence which informs our modal apprehension of it.

It is in this way that the trinitarian pattern escapes becoming a type of theosophy. It is important that its structure be maintained always in the context of its unfathomable object, namely the immanent life of God. As long as we do not orientate this structure totally within the structure of human knowing, within being proportionate to human knowing, we do not make it a theosophy, that is, wisdom of divine things that humans attain to in virtue of their "natural" link with the divine.

But what have I done? Let me review the progress of this paper. It began with drawing attention to Lonergan's suggestion of a "theorem of the supernatural" as the accomplishment of the 13th century. I argue that the notion of the theorem may help us under-

38. Chadwick, *Augustine*, p. 92.

stand in turn the enormous achievement of the early church in its elaboration of the co-eternity of the Father and the Son/Logos. The notion of the "eternal" is so embedded in our language, usually in the sense of "everlasting," that we do not realize its significance. It itself is nothing less than a theorem in its own right, because it delineates what is divine from what is not according to origin and being. We make this distinction rather easily today only because it was so painfully, yet overwhelmingly, achieved then. It is hard for us to really grasp that the early Christians had a very "materialistic" notion of God and spirit as somehow being interfused and continuous with the world we inhabit. Gradation between human and divine was simply the "common sense" of the age. That there should be relation without gradation required a theorem, a theorem I have designated as that of the eternal.

Quite simply the theorem of the supernatural, the "second" theorem, was elaborated because the first theorem could not encompass all aspects of the human and divine encounter. As we have noted, the theorem of the supernatural achieves a distinction between what is good and ordinary and what is good and super-ordinary. It achieved a co-relation between nature and grace without subverting either term, just as the first theorem achieved a co-relation between God and the world without subversion.

Now these two theorems determine the formal structure of Western Christian theology. Not that there are not reactions against them, but they predetermine the shape of the reaction. I have used Coleridge's typology of the Platonic and the Aristotelean to categorize the theorems, the first representing Plato and the second using Aristotle. The weight of both theorems has required us to structure them or be crushed by them. They either must form an arch or a pile of rock to bury us. Such is the origin of the quest for the third theorem, the theorem of the relational, a theorem which is archetectonic in the sense it has to make an arch out of the pile of rocks, but does not add any more rocks to the pile. I would argue that it was the necessity of going beyond a merely formal or abstract reconciliation between the nouomena (the world of Plato) and the phenomena (the world of Aristotle) that forced Kant into his critique which showed that metaphysical formalities ultimately lacked significance precisely because they could not treat phenomena seriously. Up to then formal metaphysics could dismiss the phenomenal world as formally subordinate but such a judgement was made entirely from its own vantage point. In other word, formality itself was shown to have no real power and could not serve to effect the reconciliation between the eternal and the phenomenal.

But what could and what can? Kant is pivotal because he has illuminated the question. The Hegelian critique of Kant orientated the reconciliation within a dialectic of historically mediated achievements of consciousness, culminating in the attainment of Spirit or reason that is conscious of itself. But Hegel's critics in turn accuse him of not freeing himself from a last formality, that of system. Whatever Hegel's true interpretation, there is no doubt that Hegel's "essay" and the reaction it evokes are still very much determining factors in resolving the question. My purpose has been merely to point out that the attempt to resolve the question can be generalized into a search to establish a true demarcation between order and chaos, the chief "political" preoccupation of the post-Kantian era. Within the scope of this question I attempted to explore the structure of the third theorem and suggest that as a third theorem its very relational premise requires that it be more than "formally" relational. Hence the modality of dialectic.

But reflection on dialectic evoked reminiscences of trinitarian formulation. The third theorem does not point to anything of itself but to the relation of the other two.³⁹ And the other two do not describe two realities but one. But such statements raise reactions. Am I being tendentious as a Christian imposing a pattern of reality onto the "facts?" What I hope to have done rather is to show that the "facts" (i.e. the intellectual constructs identified as three theorems) reflect a pattern of reality. That reality is not a "closed" reality and the structure of its openness is the trinitarian structure.

In other words reality is not real because it is trinitarian (a formal statement) but it's trinitarian because it's real. I claim that the pattern is not formally given but itself apprehended only dialectically from the very challenge to our consciousness of order and chaos. It is a heuristic structure in that it maintains the structure of mystery, of the "known unknown" while allowing us to proceed intelligently, if provisionally, in making statements about "everything that is." The *doctrine* of the Trinity has become formalized but it is not the formalization which conveys its truth any longer. Nor does a Hegelian systemization and philosophical explication of its significance. It can only remain authoritative if it respects the mystery it means to communicate. We cannot apply it to anything (for then we are tendentious) but can only ask if anything reflects its pattern. And it just turns out that for anything to be anything, there are already patterns established, patterns of interaction between known and being known. It is the interaction that

39. For a suggestive account of the enduring presence of the Trinity and the role of the Holy Spirit as relational, see David L. Miller *Three Faces of God: Traces of the Trinity in Literature and Life*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) pp. 41-63; 95-114.

constitutes the reality and the trinitarian structure merely wishes to be the simplest attestation to that mystery — not of the lack of coherence but of its super-abundance.

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