INTENTIONALITY ANALYSIS AND INTERSUBJECTIVITY

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ABSTRACT

In *Method in Theology* Bernard Lonergan acknowledged the reality of intersubjectivity in human life and sought to incorporate it in various ways into his understanding of theological method. Building upon Lonergan's insights, this essay indicates how his three stages of meaning and different realms of meaning can be expanded in terms of the author's Neo-Whiteheadian metaphysics of universal intersubjectivity so as to justify a communal and processive approach to truth and objectivity in human affairs. In this way, Lonergan's transcendental method is clearly vindicated in a Neo-Whiteheadian as well as a Thomistic context and the resulting synthesis of metaphysical perspectives notably strengthens the position of those who advocate discussion and dialogue over the use of force for the resolution of persistent controversial issues.

I. Introduction

Over twenty years ago I published an article in *Horizons* entitled "Authentic Subjectivity and Genuine Objectivity" in which I first cited with approval Bernard Lonergan's maxim "Genuine objectivity is the fruit of authentic subjectivity,"[1] but then argued that total objectivity is impossible even for God and that the best to which human beings can aspire in matters of truth and value is a consensus position based on interconnected subjective viewpoints.[2] While still believing this to be the case, I now realize much better that the key issue in this debate over objectivity and subjectivity is one's starting-point for further reflection. Does one first reflect on the dynamics of human self-awareness or does one initially reflect on what seems to be the workings of Nature as a

[1]Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 292; see also 265.

[2]Joseph A. Bracken, "Authentic Subjectivity and Genuine Objectivity," *Horizons* 11 (1984): 290-303.

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cosmic process? Lonergan's aim in his first major work *Insight*, for example, was to move from naive realism to critical realism with rational self-consciousness as both necessary consequence and ultimate goal of that endeavor. Thus, while clearly presupposing a world order governed by "schemes of recurrence" and emergent probability,[3] his focus, as we shall see below, was inevitably more on the dynamics of the human mind than on the inner workings of the cosmic process. My own worldview, on the contrary, is more openly cosmological, being based on the premise that societies or environments are the primordial units of reality and that individual entities come into and go out of existence within these enduring social contexts. Thus, where Lonergan primarily aims at the achievement of authentic subjectivity at the human level of existence and activity, I focus attention on intersubjectivity, not just at the human level but at all levels of existence and activity, including the level of reality proper to the triune God.

In the present essay, accordingly, I will revisit the theme of the earlier article but with closer attention to the details of Lonergan's argument; above all, in *Method in Theology* and with expansion of my own position so as to make clear its basic compatibility with Lonergan's epistemology. My intention, of course, is not thereby to demean the achievement of Bernard Lonergan, one of the most influential philosopher/theologians of the late twentieth century, but to see whether his intellectual horizon and my own can be better harmonized or perhaps even synthesized with added value to both perspectives. In addition, a merger of these differing metaphysical schemes would notably strengthen the position of those who advocate discussion and dialogue over the use of force for the resolution of persistent controversial issues.

II. Lonergan's Stages and Realms of Meaning

In the chapter on "Meaning" in *Method in Theology*, Lonergan first acknowledges the reality of intersubjectivity in human life: "Prior to the 'we' that results from the mutual love of an 'I' and a 'thou', there is the earlier 'we' that precedes the distinction of subjects and survives its oblivion. This prior 'we' is vital and functional."[4] By that last statement he evidently means that intersubjectivity exists normally on a feeling-level between human beings and emerges quite spontaneously. A smile, for example, conveys intersubjective meaning. That is, unlike

[3]Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, 3rd ed. (New York: Philosophical Library, 1970), 115-28; see also Robert M. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), esp. 527-58, for an extension of Lonergan's approach to more cosmological perspectives.

[4]Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 57.

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language which carries somewhat impersonal or objective meaning, a smile "reveals or even betrays the subject, and the revelation is immediate. It is not the basis of some inference."[5] Yet, in line with Lonergan's own comments above, does a smile or any other bodily gesture presuppose an ontological relationship between two human beings that survives their encounter here and now? In effect, what is the deeper reality of the "we" that, as Lonergan says, precedes the distinction of subjects and survives its oblivion?

Instead of elaborating on this point in *Method in Theology*, Lonergan outlines areas where human intersubjectivity is clearly at work: namely, art, symbols and language. In language, he notes, "meaning finds its greatest liberation."[6] This is unquestionably correct but it likewise signals an implicit priority in his thinking. As he sees it, meaning is incomplete until it achieves rational articulation: "One settles the status of the object of thought, that it is merely an object of thought, or a mathematical entity, or a real thing lying in the world of human experience, or a transcendent reality beyond that world."[7] This is in line, of course, with his previously articulated precepts of transcendental method: "Be attentive, Be intelligent, Be reasonable, Be responsible."[8] But the focus of attention thereby subtly shifts from the felt realm of intersubjectivity between individuals to intentionality analysis, subjectivity within a single individual. The primordial "we" on a feeling-level is lost from sight as one analyzes the complex operations of the rationally self-conscious "I."

In discussing the "functions of meaning," Lonergan does make regular reference to "a world mediated by meaning."[9] In no small measure this is a world constituted by human intersubjectivity but not exclusively so: "This larger world, mediated by meaning, does not lie within anyone's immediate experience. It is not even the sum, the integral, of the totality of all worlds of immediate experience."[10] The world of nature, accordingly, serves as the raw material for the "man-made, artificial world . . . of human acts of meaning."[11] Moreover, through the constitutive function of meaning, human beings set up institutions, establish rules for the exchange of goods and services, formulate laws to govern their collective behavior, in effect, create entire cultures to serve their needs and purposes. Here Lonergan's awareness of the social character of human existence is quite evident. Like-

[5]Ibid., 60.
[6]Ibid., 70.
[7]Ibid., 74.
[8]Ibid., 53.
[9]Ibid., 76-81.
[10]Ibid., 77.
[11]Ibid., 78.

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wise, in the communicative function of language, Lonergan has a social context clearly in mind. For, within their communities human beings share a common history and common prospects for the future. But there is still a further question. How does this world mediated by human acts of meaning fit into the broader world of nature? Does creation as a whole also exhibit a sociality, an intrinsic interconnectedness, which ultimately makes possible the world mediated by human acts of meaning? And, if so, whence does it arise, simply by divine fiat in the primordial act of creation or in virtue of its own intrinsic ontological togetherness, its "we-ness" on a cosmic scale which is reflected in the felt human experience of intersubjectivity?

Where one might expect further discussion of this key issue, namely, in the analysis of different "realms of meaning" in the same chapter on "Meaning," Lonergan prefers to focus on specifically human realms of meaning: common sense, theory and interiority.[12] One must applaud him for the deft way in which he distinguishes undifferentiated consciousness in the realm of common sense from the partially differentiated consciousness of theory and then shows how they can be integrated within fully differentiated consciousness proper to the realm of interiority. Interiority is achieved "when the subject relates his different procedures to the several realms, relates the several realms to one another, and consciously shifts from one realm to another by consciously changing his procedures."[13] Certainly this makes good sense epistemologically since one is thereby critically aware of what one is doing at every moment of the cognitional process.

Yet, the realm of interiority as thus conceived by Lonergan seems to overlook the possibility of a further realm of meaning and value which would only be accessed through intersubjective experience and which would be grounded in a specifically social ontology or worldview in which truth and objectivity are achieved by sharing insights from and with others so as to create broadly conceived consensus positions on issues of greater moment.[14] Admittedly, such an ontology or

[12]Ibid., 81-85.

[13]Ibid., 84.

[14]An example of what I have in mind is provided by Daniel Helminiak in a recent article where he indicates how Lonergan's analysis of the human spirit could ground a science of spirituality with a claim to truth and objectivity distinct from the belief-systems of different world religions. As he notes, "if attention to the human spirit is the key to a theoretical understanding of spirituality, attention to the interaction of the human spirit, psyche, and organism in a physical and social environment would provide a basis for explaining the rich phenomena of lived spiritualities, and attention to the embeddedness of spiritualities in social groups and organizations would open unto consideration of religion, culture, and society" (Daniel A. Helminiak, "The Role of Spirituality in Formulating a Theory of the Psychology of Religion," *Zygon* 41 [2006]: 219). Yet such a science of spirituality based on Lonergan's transcendental precepts would still be

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worldview would be an instance of theory for Lonergan and as a result should be considered intermediate to achieving a higher degree of self-awareness at the level of interiority. Yet, as Stephen Toulmin commented some years ago,

> Ever since human beings first began to reflect about, and to discuss, their situation within the world of natural things, their most comprehensive ambition has been to talk sense about *the Universe as a whole*. In practical terms, this ambition has reflected the need to recognize where we stand in the world into which we have been born, to grasp our place in the scheme of things and to feel at home within it.[15]

Toulmin readily admits the difficulty in coming up with a new account of "the overall scheme of things" in the light of contemporary natural science. But, reflecting on his own academic career, he concludes that "it will be no insult to a Heidegger or a Wittgenstein if we now seek to move beyond their critical insights and take up again the larger cosmological issues that formed a traditional part of the philosophical agenda from the time of Aristotle on."[16]

For this same reason I have always had difficulty in accepting fully Lonergan's claim that in the third "stage" of meaning, the stage of interiority, "the modes of common sense and theory remain, science asserts its autonomy from philosophy, and there occur philosophies that leave theory to science and take their stand on interiority."[17] Certainly modern science has developed its own methodology and its own basic concepts which are not derivative from classical metaphysics as in past centuries. But unhappily, as Toulmin points out, scientists tend to use scientific method as applicable to their own discipline so as to draw philosophical and theological conclusions about "the Universe as a Whole" which are often naive and in any case misleading. One alternative in this situation, of course, is to have recourse to Lonergan's precepts of transcendental method so as to point out the error of their ways. But another alternative is to return to philosophical cosmology, as Toulmin proposes, and construct a new postmodern metaphysics based on intentionality analysis and human intersubjectivity but

instrumental to a further goal, namely, the communal sharing of insights by participants to the dialogue with a view to setting forth consensus positions on matters of common concern.

[15]Stephen Toulmin, *The Return to Cosmology: Postmodern Science and the Theology of Nature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 1. Toulmin is also the author of *Human Understanding: The Collective Use and Evolution of Concepts* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), a book comparable in many respects to Lonergan's *Insight*.

[16]Toulmin, *The Return to Cosmology*, 16.

[17]Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 85.

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broadened to cosmic proportions so as to become a new social ontology, a metaphysics grounded in the hypothesis of universal intersubjectivity. In what follows I will sketch my own revision of the cosmological scheme of Alfred North Whitehead along these lines.

III. A Neo-Whiteheadian Cosmology

Whitehead was a well known mathematician and theoretical physicist before turning his attention fulltime to philosophy. Hence, in an early philosophical work *Science and the Modern World*, he critiqued the implicit materialism in the dominant worldview of early modern science which had perdured even to his own day. That is, everyone intuitively realizes that the world of nature is more than simply a cosmic machine governed by mathematical principles. But the formulation of the underlying laws of nature in the language of mathematics by Galileo, Newton and others was a brilliant success, scientifically speaking. So, most scientists are still guilty in Whitehead's view of the fallacy of misplaced concreteness. That is, they trust in the abstractions represented by their mathematical formulae more than in their own concrete experience of Nature as something alive rather than dead.[18]

Likewise, in line with the model of nature as a cosmic machine, they have reverted to the atomistic materialism of Democritus and Lucretius in the ancient world but with allowance in many cases for the existence of God to keep the machine working smoothly. In this way, they are guilty of still another logical fallacy, namely, that of simple location. That is, an inert bit of matter corresponding to an atomic part of the cosmic machine is thought to be simply located "in a definite finite region of space, and throughout a definite finite duration of time, apart from any essential reference of the relations of that bit of matter to other regions of space and to other durations of time."[19] Just like interchangeable parts in a machine, therefore, atoms have purely external relations to one another. They are not internally affected by the presence and activity of other atoms in their vicinity but remain inert and immobile where they are currently located until moved by some external force.

Whitehead's solution to such a lifeless approach to the world of nature was to stipulate that not atoms as inert bits of matter but actual occasions, momentary self-constituting subjects of experience with in-

[18]Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Free Press, 1967), 58-59.
[19]Ibid.

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ternal relations to one another, are "the final real things of which the world is made up."[20] In this way, nature is alive and continually in process since its component parts keep changing in virtue of their internal relations to one another. Relationality or interconnectedness rather than substantiality and separateness is then characteristic of Nature on all levels of existence and activity. Scientific analysis, for example, reveals that inanimate things, whether natural or man-made, are not inert realities but clusters of dynamically interrelated parts or members. Whitehead's follow-up insight was to propose that the root cause of all this interrelated activity among the parts has to be their deeper reality as momentary self-constituting subjects of experience gathered together into "societies" with a "common element of form."[21]

Yet, in solving the problem of atomistic materialism on one level, Whitehead in my judgment remained more or less captive to that worldview on another level. That is, he remained basically an atomist in his thinking.[22] The atoms, to be sure, are not inert bits of matter but momentary subjects of experience. But the "societies" into which they aggregate in order to constitute the persons and things of common sense experience have no objective unity beyond that effected by a "regnant" actual occasion insofar as it gives order and cohesiveness to its contemporaries within a "structured society."[23] This equivalent of a "soul" even within entities as small as a molecule strains credulity.

In addition, for my own purposes, something more has to be added in order to allow for genuine intersubjectivity within Whitehead's scheme. For, actual occasions as momentary subjects of experience do not last long enough to have intersubjective relations with their contemporaries. In addition, Whitehead explicitly denies that any single actual occasion can be aware of what it itself is becoming, much less of what its contemporaries are becoming.[24] Hence, even though Whitehead claims that "the final real things of which the world is made up" are subjects of experience, the only way to salvage the notion of intersubjectivity within his philosophy is to rethink the understanding of society as he presents it in *Process and Reality*. Societies of actual occasions, after all, endure as the actual occasions themselves come into and go out of existence with great rapidity.[25] Hence, if intersub-

[20]Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, Corrected Edition, ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: Free Press, 1978), 18.

[21]Ibid., 34-35.

[22]Ibid., 35: "the ultimate metaphysical truth is atomism."

[23]Ibid., 103.

[24]Ibid., 85.

[25]See Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Free Press, 1967), 204.

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jectivity exists at all within a Whiteheadian context, it must exist between societies of actual occasions corresponding to the persons and things of ordinary experience.

But what then is a society as distinct from its constituent actual occasions and how can it be involved with other societies in intersubjective relationships, given that it is not itself a subject of experience like its constituents? In *Process and Reality*, Whitehead makes passing reference to societies as "environments" vis-à-vis one another.[26] Likewise, he envisions these environments as hierarchically ordered: "In reference to any given society the world of actual entities is to be conceived as forming a background in layers of social order, the defining characteristics becoming wider and more general as we widen the background."[27] As I see it, Whiteheadian societies can then be understood as layered fields of activity for their constituent actual occasions. Within each field, the actual occasions by their interrelatedness generate the "common element of form" spoken of above and imprint it on the objective structure of the field. The field, in turn, as that which endures through the ongoing succession of actual occasions, perpetuates that structure for "prehension" by the next set of actual occasions.[28] In this way, one and the same objective structure or "common element of form" is carried forward from moment to moment so as to guarantee the ongoing ontological identity of the Whiteheadian society.

All this one might initially dismiss as a nicety of Whiteheadian scholarship, of interest only to a select few. On the contrary, it has profound implications for a metaphysics of intersubjectivity. For, understood in this way, two Whiteheadian societies are intersubjectively involved with one another when their fields of activity overlap and they together begin to structure a common field of activity. Intersubjectivity, in other words, happens when two or more subjects of experience co-constitute a shared field of activity. A Whiteheadian society, after all, always has a subjective focus in terms of a regnant actual occasion (or current set of actual occasions in the case of inanimate things). So in and through their subjective focus from moment to moment Whiteheadian societies can engage in intersubjective activity that lasts beyond the present moment and has enduring effects. That is, their common field of activity continues to grow in structure and complexity as the relationship between the initial actual occasions devel-

[26]Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 90.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Ibid., 91: "Thus in a society [field], the members can only exist by reason of the laws which dominate the society, and the laws only come into being by reason of the analogous characters of the members of the society."

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ops and expands to include still other actual occasions and even other societies of actual occasions with their own distinctive fields of activity.

Stating the same point in more common sense terms, we may ask ourselves what serves as the ontological ground for an I-Thou relationship between two human beings if not an intentional "space" which they order and structure by their thoughts, feelings and activities vis-a-vis one another. Both parties are at home in that space. It belongs to each of them individually and yet to neither one exclusively. The influence and activity of third parties are also part of that shared space between two individuals. But, to the extent that this happens, the space proper to an I-Thou relationship becomes incorporated into the broader space or field of activity proper to communities, large and small, to which the two people both individually and as a pair belong. As noted above, fields can be hierarchically ordered from the smallest to the greatest, that is, from the closer, more intimate relationship proper to friendship or marriage to the much more inclusive but still important relationships found in various forms of community life.

Thus, what starts out as something purely intentional and strictly interpersonal inevitably gets visible external expression in the form of joint behavior patterns and living arrangements (above all, in the case of marriage and other forms of co-habitation). Likewise, on the broader community level, institutional structures gradually take shape to stabilize and systematize initially spontaneous patterns of behavior among individuals. The larger the community, the broader and more complex its distinctive field of activity. Such a field is partly spatial or geographical but likewise partly temporal or historical, consisting in growth over time of a common approach to life and shared values for living together. As Josiah Royce commented in his ground-breaking study of community life many years ago, human communities are invariably based upon their members sharing the memories of past events in basically the same way and sharing their hopes and expectations for a common future.[29]

In brief, then, when a Whiteheadian society is understood to be a structured field of activity for its constituent actual occasions, it offers a model for the operation of intersubjectivity at different levels of existence and activity within the world of Nature. The individual subjects of experience remain distinct from one another and yet together they fashion something separate from themselves which endures over time, namely, a structured field of activity which serves as both resource and

[29]See Josiah Royce, *The Problem of Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 248-49.

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constraint for the interrelated activity of future subjects of experience. Subjects of experience by their interrelated activity can, of course, modify the structure of the field for their successors but only very modestly so that the field with its basic structure still intact can serve as the principle of continuity in the midst of the ongoing change of constituent actual occasions.

IV. Harmonizing the Two Worldviews

Earlier in this article I proposed that what is needed as a complement to Lonergan's focus on interiority or the personal appropriation of insights from the world of theory is a metaphysics of universal intersubjectivity in which truth and objectivity are a byproduct of communal interaction not just on the human level but at all levels of existence and activity within the world of Nature. Elsewhere I have indicated how this reinterpretation of Whiteheadian societies as structured fields of activity for their constituent actual occasions can serve as a working hypothesis for the emergence first of life and then of mind within the cosmic process.[30] Over time successive generations of actual occasions within a given society can reshape the "common element of form" linking them together and thereby give rise to a new society and a new set of actual occasions representing a higher, more complex level of existence and activity within Nature. Similarly, this field-oriented approach to Whiteheadian societies allows for a panentheistic understanding of the God-world relationship in which creation as an integrated set of finite fields of activity exists within the all-encompassing field of activity proper to the three divine persons of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.[31] In the remainder of this essay, accordingly, I will restrict myself to the way in which this same neo-Whiteheadian scheme functions to validate a new consensus-oriented approach to truth and objectivity in human affairs.

In my earlier article for *Horizons* I stated that objectivity follows upon subjectivity, that is, the activity of individual subjects of experience, yet serves as the ontological basis for the activity of new subjects of experience in the next moment of existence.[32] By "subjectivity," of course, I meant "intersubjectivity." For truth and objectivity are in my

[30]See, e.g., Joseph A. Bracken, *The One in the Many: A Contemporary Reconstruction of the God-World Relationship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 157-78; also Bracken, "Emergent Monism and the Classical Doctrine of the Soul," *Zygon* 39 (2004): 161-74.

[31]Bracken, *The One in the Many*, 120-30; also Bracken, "Panentheism: A Field-Oriented Approach," in *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being*, ed. Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 211-21.

[32]Bracken, "Authentic Subjectivity and Genuine Objectivity," 295.

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view inherently communal and processive. By communal I mean that no single subject of experience can grasp the whole truth of what de facto is the case at any given moment. Even God, as I shall indicate below, does not possess a totally objective grasp of the truth. By processive, I mean that truth is never fully attained; in line with a process-relational approach to reality it is always incomplete. Both these statements require further explanation.

My claim for the communal character of truth is based upon the model of Whiteheadian societies as structured fields of activity for their constituent actual occasions. If the objective reality of a structured field of activity is to be located in the "common element of form" generated at every moment by the interplay of a given set of actual occasions (momentary subjects of experience), then objectivity is possible only in virtue of shared experiences. Each actual occasion or momentary subject of experience contributes to the common element of form for the entire group but none in its self-constitution represents it completely. Each actual occasion "prehends" the structure of the field in which it originates in a slightly different way than its contemporaries. Yet together they compose the objective reality of the field, the common element of form for the society to which they all belong. Transposed to the level of human intersubjectivity, this means that no human being has a totally objective grasp of the situation which she or he seeks to understand and control. What is generated through common activity from moment to moment can only be understood and controlled through dialogue, sharing of viewpoints in order to reach as far as possible a consensus position on what is indeed the case and what needs to be done as a result.

In the same earlier article I proposed that not even God has a totally objective understanding of the truth at any given moment. God has certainly a more objective understanding of reality than any creature. But, if God is a divine subject of experience in a world likewise populated by finite subjects of experience, then God cooperates with those same creatures in producing a universe with a common element of form at every moment. God certainly sees the bigger picture in terms of what is going on at any given moment. But if objectivity results from the coordinated activity of individual subjects of experience, then at the very least God's experience does not include the subjective experience of the creatures with whom God is collaborating to produce a common world. Subjectivity, whether in God or in any of God's creatures, can only be known indirectly through reflection on its objective effects. As Emmanuel Levinas recognized years ago, there is an infinity in the subjectivity of the Other which exceeds all efforts at objective compre-

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hension.[33] Hence, even God cannot experience my subjectivity or interiority as I do, given my ontological reality as a separate subject of experience.

Confirmation of this last statement is available if one conceives God not as unipersonal but as tripersonal in line with the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. The three divine persons prehend one another perfectly and thereby compose the common element of form for their objective reality as a divine community from moment to moment. But their prehension of one another is purely objective; they cannot directly prehend one another's subjectivity without abandoning their own subjectivity. The "Father" knows the "Son" perfectly but cannot have the experience of the "Son" without becoming the "Son." Similarly, the "Son" cannot have the experience of the "Father" or the "Holy Spirit" if the "Son" is to retain "his" identity as the "Son" within the divine community. Thus the infinity of the divine persons seems to reside more in their unique subjectivity vis-à-vis one another than in their objective reality as one God at any given moment of the divine existence.[34]

Furthermore, truth is necessarily processive since it reflects the changing character of the relations between subjects of experience within the field of activity proper to the divine persons and all their creatures. Objectivity, however, is not thereby lost if one accepts the principle stated above that objectivity follows upon intersubjectivity and yet serves as the necessary ontological base for the activity of new subjects of experience in the next moment of existence. The new subjects of experience are constrained in their self-constitution by the patterns and structures already established by the interrelated activity of their predecessors. The world, accordingly, does not change dramatically from one moment to the next even though it never remains exactly the same for any length of time. There are no eternal truths but there are certainly enduring truths such as the ongoing relations among the three divine persons which provide the basic structure of the field of activity proper to themselves and their creatures.

At the same time this does not mean that the divine persons have

[33]Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 51.

[34]This presupposes, of course, that there is process or change within the divine life, at least with respect to the relations of the divine persons with their creatures. But it also raises the question of whether there is a logical inconsistency in the affirmation of the existence of an actually infinite being, even in the case of a purely spiritual being like God. On this point see my book *The Divine Matrix: Creativity as Link between East and West* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995), 11-37; 142-43, nn. 1-4; 145 nn. 4 and 8, where I discuss the understanding of infinity in Aristotle, Plotinus, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas.

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only conjectural knowledge of the future of the world process. This is a common assumption among followers of Whitehead and many others as well. But, as I have explained elsewhere,[35] I believe that it is mistaken even in terms of Whitehead's own philosophy, notably his understanding of the "consequent nature" of God. In his view all the conflicting events taking place in this world are nevertheless preserved within the divine consequent nature through their "relation to the completed whole."[36] But a whole that is itself in process of development is evidently not complete. Hence, even on Whiteheadian grounds, God must be able to comprehend the whole of the cosmic process in order to align with one another all the events taking place from moment to moment.

Yet, as I see it, this does not mean that God thereby unilaterally determines what happens and does not happen. Rather, in line with the neo-Whiteheadian scheme sketched above, God empowers each actual occasion or created subject of experience to make its own self-constituting decision, albeit always with divine guidance or a "lure" in one direction rather than in another. Hence, if, as Aquinas notes, God sees events in their "presentiality" as they happen,[37] then God is clearly ordering at every moment of cosmic history a dynamic, ever-changing reality. The truth of the cosmic process is accordingly processive even for God who is present to this ever-changing reality in its totality but not in such a way as to determine in advance the outcome. God uses the divine omniscience simply to order and systematize what has already happened and to provide initial aims or lures for new sets of actual occasions as they come into existence within the cosmic process.

V. Conclusion

These remarks, of course, are only intended to sketch the broad contours of a specifically social ontology which in my view offers a fourth realm of meaning and a further stage of meaning beyond that of interiority or the personal appropriation of rational self-consciousness as proposed by Bernard Lonergan *in Method in Theology.* As stated

[35]See Joseph A. Bracken, "A New Look at Time and Eternity," *Theology and Science* 2 (2004): 77-88. I am heavily reliant in this article on Wolfgang Pannenberg's understanding of time and eternity in his *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 3, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 592-95; likewise Robert C. Neville's understanding of eternity as the "togetherness" of past, present and future in his *Eternity and Time's Flow* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 109-20.

[36]Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 346.

[37]Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, Q. 14, a. 13, resp.

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earlier, this is in no way to discount the achievement of Lonergan in noting the important differences between common sense, theory and rational self-awareness and in indicating how one can systematically appropriate that third level of cognitional activity. Likewise, as already noted, in *Method in Theology* Lonergan acknowledged the reality of intersubjectivity in human life and sought to incorporate it in various ways into his understanding of theological method. But the point of this article has been to propose that the social ontology which is clearly present but under-emphasized in Lonergan's work could be made much more explicit if somehow synthesized with the neo-Whiteheadian metaphysics which I have sketched in these pages.

As I see it, this would be to the overall benefit of both perspectives. For, then it would be clear that Lonergan's transcendental approach to human cognition can be effectively employed not only within Thomistic metaphysics but also within process-oriented metaphysical schemes such as my own as well. Likewise, the process tradition would in my judgment benefit significantly from adoption of a much more explicit epistemological grounding such as Lonergan offers. Finally, and perhaps most importantly for the purposes of this essay, if in line with the social ontology sketched above the search for truth and objectivity in human affairs were better accepted as necessarily a communal enterprise and as inevitably processive in character, one could look forward with much more confidence to a vastly expanded role for discussion and dialogue in the resolution of persistent controversial issues.

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