

RAHNER AND LONERGAN ON THE COMMITMENT TO ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

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Rahner and Lonergan bear witness to and emphasize a personal commitment to St. Thomas Aquinas. This personal commitment to St. Thomas is what counts, whether the study of St. Thomas is encouraged by ecclesiastical authority or not, whether Thomistic Studies boom or are considered out of fashion. The personal commitment to St. Thomas has its grounds in the ongoing relevance of St. Thomas thought, and this sets before us the tasks of appropriating his framework, and transposing Aquinas' framework into the self-understanding of the contemporary person as we search for answers and solutions to questions and problems of our time. And the process of transposing Aquinas' framework into the self-understanding of the contemporary person leads to developing the position of Aquinas, thereby arguing a case for what William A. Wallace calls "developmental Thomism".

The year 2002 marked the 750th Anniversary since St. Thomas Aquinas began teaching at the University of Paris. So it was befitting to have a conference in Hungary dedicated to "a reassessment of the meaning of Aquinas" and "his influence", an influence which, for some, is not restricted to commitment to the school known as "Thomism".

In 1974, a colloquy on medieval religious thought, which took place at the University of Chicago Divinity School, was organised jointly by the University of Chicago, the Catholic Theological Union and the Jesuit School of Theology at Chicago to mark the septcentenary cel-

eboration of Saints Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas.¹ This colloquy had as its leitmotif the theme of “Tradition and Innovation”. For it is seen that Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas were for the people of their time great innovators of the Christian Tradition. The opening lectures of this colloquy were delivered by Richard McKeon, Bernard Lonergan and Karl Rahner. Rahner and Lonergan, two outstanding philosopher-theologians of the 20th century, spoke on Aquinas.

Rahner and Lonergan, themselves genuine innovators of the Christian Tradition, bear witness to and emphasize a personal commitment to St. Thomas Aquinas. This personal commitment to St. Thomas is what counts, whether the study of St. Thomas is encouraged by ecclesiastical authority or not, whether Thomistic Studies boom or are considered out of fashion (§1). The personal commitment to St. Thomas has its grounds in the ongoing relevance of St. Thomas thought (§2), and this sets before us the tasks of appropriating his framework (§3), and transposing Aquinas’ framework into the self-understanding of the contemporary person as we search for answers and solutions to questions and problems of our time (§4).

And the work of transposing Aquinas’ framework into the self-understanding of the contemporary person leads to developing the position of Aquinas, thereby arguing a case for what William A. Wallace calls “developmental Thomism” (§5).

I.

If the *Aeterni Patris* of Leo XIII in 1879 set into motion the boom in Thomistic Studies, it remains that that trend waned particularly after the second Vatican Council. The flow of literary turn-out on Thomistic Studies later experienced an ebb marked by disinterest in Thomism in particular and Scholasticism as a whole. As Lonergan remarked, “what had been a torrent has become a trickle.”² But in the period of draught of interest in St. Thomas, Rahner and Lonergan continued to stress their indebtedness to him and insisted on the relevance of the Angelic Doctor for the post-conciliar developments in philosophy and theology. They continued to refer to him, to speak about him, and also warned against any attempt to jettison him from the framework

¹ ‘Celebrating the Medieval Heritage: A Colloquy on the Thought of Aquinas and Bonaventure’. Supplement to *The Journal of Religion* vol. LVIII, 1978.

² B. Lonergan: *A Third Collection*, ed. F. E. Crowe, New York: Paulist Press, 1985: 35.

of Catholic thought or neglect him. Their personal commitment to St. Thomas remained steadfast both in the flow and ebb of Thomistic literary production.

A tour of their earlier and later writings reveals their commitment to St. Thomas Aquinas in and out of season of Thomistic scholarship. Karl Rahner's major philosophical works, *Spirit in the World* and *Hearer of the Word*, form the bedrock of his theological writings.³ They were written in the high season of Thomistic Scholarship, and together with other related smaller writings of his, express his personal allegiance to St. Thomas.

In his later writings, especially those of the post-conciliar period, Rahner drew attention of contemporary Catholic theologians to the importance of St. Thomas. He regretted the "strange silence on the subject of Thomas"⁴ shown by the recession of St. Thomas into the background among theologians. Rahner wanted this trend to be put to a halt, not through a sort of naïve commitment to St. Thomas such as restoring the former seminary Thomism or making his works the textbook of theology for today, but rather by making Thomas "alive in contemporary theology even though his function in it is more or less that of a Father of the Church."⁵ Rahner hoped that St. Thomas' teaching could be kept alive in contemporary theology, if independent thinkers constantly emerge afresh in theology and take up courage to swim against the current of the cult of mere modernism by entering the arduous school of a great master like St. Thomas. It is the presence of such independent and courageous thinkers and theologians that could guarantee keeping St. Thomas alive in contemporary philosophical and theological thinking.⁶

In this period of disinterest in Thomistic studies, Rahner would lecture and publish on themes concerning St. Thomas. His essay on *The Concept of Truth according to Aquinas*, which came from the same period with his *Spirit in the World* and *Hearer of the World*, would appear in publication, in a then new volume of the Theological Investigations. Rahner would write on the *Hiddenness of God*, and *The incomprehensibility of God according to St. Thomas*. These two themes have their roots in his *Spirit*

³ G. A. McCool: 'The Philosophy of the Human Person in Karl Rahner', *Theological Studies* 22, 1961: 537-562.

⁴ K. Rahner: *Theological Investigation*, Vol. XIII, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1975: 3f.

⁵ *Ibid.*: 4.

⁶ *Ibid.*: 12.

in the World and Hearer of the Word. His writing on *The incomprehensibility of God in St. Thomas* has appeared in at least three different forms, attesting to the fact that he spoke on this theme in the 1970s at least for three different occasions that demanded increasing penetration into the matter. Rahner took up again in his *Foundations of Christian Faith* the epistemological grounding already present in his *Hearer of the Word* that is grounded in the Thomistic metaphysics of knowledge. Prof. Coreth⁷ has added Rahner's *Foundations of Christian Faith* to *Spirit in the World* and *Hearer of the Word* as the main works in which one can find the philosophical foundations of Karl Rahner's Theology. Coreth would say further that most of the criticisms of Rahner's theology owe their origins to a lack of understanding of its philosophical foundations. These works, which form the philosophical foundations of Rahner's theology, have their roots in Rahner's interpretation of St. Thomas. And to conclude, it is worth saying that Rahner kept mentioning explicitly the Name of Aquinas in all the sixteen volumes of his *Schriften zur Theologie*,⁸ thereby making the voice of Aquinas resound both in his early and later writings.

Lonergan's two major historical works on St. Thomas, the *Gratia Operans* and the *Verbum*, were also written when the outpour of Thomistic scholarship was a torrent. In his first major work on St. Thomas Aquinas, *Gratia Operans*, he studied the speculative development of St. Thomas on the question of operative grace and freedom. He followed up this historical study of St. Thomas with his investigation of the *Verbum* in the thought of St. Thomas. In the *Verbum* he studied Aquinas on cognitional theory.⁹ Lonergan's major philosophical work, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, is indebted to St. Thomas. Lonergan notes that there are clarifications in his book *Insight*, which come from St. Thomas. For instance: the distinctions between understanding and concept, between the reflective understanding and judgement, between the question of value and the judgment, between the question of value and the judgment of value – what St. Thomas calls proceeding love.¹⁰

⁷ E. Coreth: *Beiträge zur Christlichen Philosophie*, Innsbruck: Tyrolia, 1999: 373.

⁸ K. Rahner's *Schriften zur Theologie* has 16 volumes. Even where there seems to be a lack of an explicit mention of Aquinas in the index of a volume, one can stumble upon references to St. Thomas by reading the text. But this opinion may not apply to the English translation which is titled *Theological Investigations* and amounts to 23 volumes.

⁹ B. Lonergan: *A Second Collection*, ed. W. F. J. Ryan and B. J. Tyrrell, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996: 38.

¹⁰ P. Lambert et al. (eds.): *Caring About Meaning, Patterns in the life of Bernard Lonergan*, Montreal: Thomas More Institute, 1982: 21.

In his later writings Lonergan continued to acknowledge his indebtedness to Aquinas and to develop on the conclusions of his earlier studies. He would write an *After thought*¹¹ on his study of cognitional theory in St. Thomas by saying that St. Thomas laid the foundation of the transition from soul to subject. He would defend the validity of Thomist epistemology and philosophy of God in the face of the assault launched by Leslie Dewart in his *The Future of Belief: Theism in an age come of age*.¹² He continued to argue in his later works like *Method in Theology, Philosophy of God and Theology*, and *A Second Collection*, for the need to fuse natural and systematic theology in the manner of Aquinas's *Summa Contra Gentiles* and *Summa theologiae*.¹³ He would speak on the ongoing relevance of St. Thomas within the interplay of tradition and innovation.¹⁴ And towards the end of his life, he would say in an interview in 1981 that he had learned an awful lot from St. Thomas, that the structure of his thinking is conspicuously Thomist; that other people could see what he is doing and know that that is what Thomas was doing.¹⁵

Both Rahner and Lonergan express a stable personal commitment to St. Thomas that cuts across the wide spectrum of their reflecting, teaching and writing.

2.

Rahner and Lonergan were quite aware that St. Thomas was a man of his time, and that over seven hundred years separate him from us. They knew that in this span of time so much have occurred in world history, and human thinking has taken directions that even the Angelic Doctor could not have envisaged. In spite of this they emphasized the need for a personal commitment to St. Thomas, because a lot of what he said then could still be of interest to the contemporary philosopher and theologian.

In drawing attention to the ongoing relevance of St. Thomas' thought, Rahner said that the Second Vatican Council, in spite of its less forceful tone, still refers to the role of St. Thomas in philosophical and

¹¹ B. Lonergan: *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, CWL Vol. 2, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997: 3–11.

¹² Lonergan 1996: 11–32.

¹³ *Ibid.*: 277.

¹⁴ Lonergan (1985: 35–54).

¹⁵ Lambert et al. (1982: 103).

theological formation. This Council has singled out St. Thomas among other Church Fathers in its pronouncement on ecclesiastical studies.¹⁶

We live in a post-Kantian world where the anthropological turn still influences the cultural and intellectual life of people. Rahner recommends for anyone interested in reaching back to roots of the anthropological turn in thinking, not to bypass St. Thomas who is an initiator of the anthropocentric approach.¹⁷ He is of the view that one could stumble upon certain qualities of transcendental theology in St. Thomas' writings, which shows that transcendental theology is not an absolutely new discovery of an area of investigation that has never existed before.¹⁸

In an age where historicity takes a dominant role in human thinking, Rahner sees the need for contemporary thinkers to look at St. Thomas' few explicit reflections on the historicity of the human person and of his thought.¹⁹

He stressed the need of theologians and philosophers of today to learn from St. Thomas. For they can learn from him what it means

to think in breadth, to have enough boldness to be modest and self-critical, to give devoted consideration to points which seem uninteresting or not relevant to the moment, to listen to, and take seriously, the views of others, even when they may at first be on a different wave-length from oneself in the arguments they put forward, to recognize genuinely and sincerely that one can only exercise self-criticism, and so be truly modern and avoid merely following the fashions of yesterday with the rest, by bearing in mind the ideas of earlier ages.²⁰

Contemporary philosophers and theologians can also learn from St. Thomas to recognize the limits of philosophical and theological insights and to have a sense of reverence and yearning for the eternal light. They need to learn from him not only how to strive for a precise linguistic formulation of their insights, but also how to adore the mystery that transcends all powers of expression. They need to learn from St. Thomas what it means to be forced out of the brightness of dimension which they can comprehend, and into the mystery of God where they no longer grasp but rather are grasped, where they no longer ra-

¹⁶ *Theological Investigations*, Vol. XIII, 3f.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* : 4f.

¹⁸ K. Rahner: *Theological Investigations*, Vol. XI, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974: 86.

¹⁹ *Theological Investigations*, Vol. XIII, 1of.

²⁰ *Ibid.* : 7f.

tionalize but rather adore, where they no longer control but rather are themselves subject to a higher control.²¹

For Lonergan also, there is an ongoing relevance of St. Thomas for philosophers and theologians of today. For the ongoing differentiations of consciousness and specializations of the fields of inquiry is making contemporary philosophers and theologians to be confronted with the type of problematics that St. Thomas faced. So we need today an apologetic clarification of issues just as Aquinas did. And systematic thinking in theology and philosophy today needs a broad and coherent basis just as in the days of Aquinas. Our account of the human person's salvation today presupposes an adequate understanding of the human person just as in the times of Aquinas.²²

Now, apart from the fact that we are facing a similar problematic like Aquinas, there is also continuity in the way of solving the problems. Lonergan saw in the implicit methodical approach to medieval specialization in theology something similar to our explicit methodical approach today. So it is that what is achieved in Lonergan's functional specialties of research, interpretation, and history was the kind of thing that was sought for by Aquinas in his commentaries and books of sentences. What is now carried on in the functional specialties of dogmatics and systematics is what Aquinas did in his questions and summas. There is continuity in methodical approach in theological reflection with the only difference that we now take seriously the reflection and justification of theological and philosophical methodology.²³

Again, in an age where the turn to the subject has dominated human thinking, and intentionality analysis is playing a key role in phenomenological thinking, there is a need to turn to Aquinas who had a firm grasp of what introspective analysis consists in, and who together with Aristotle and St. Augustine practised an introspective analysis whose focus lies in the objectification of our acts of conscious intentionality. Lonergan says that Aquinas said enough about the subject that enabled him to write his *Verbum* articles.²⁴

The problem of philosophical method plays a key role in philosophical thinking since the rise of modern philosophy. In the concern for philosophical method there has emerged from Kant to Gadamer various formulations of what has been characterized as the transcen-

²¹ *Ibid.* : 8.

²² *A Third Collection*, 51.

²³ *Ibid.* : 51f.

²⁴ *A Second Collection*, 53.

dental method as the proper method of philosophising. For Lonergan St. Thomas understood the point of what this method is all about, although he did not elaborate a transcendental method. An evidence of this is “St. Thomas’s argument against Averroes: Averroes’s position implied the conclusion that *this man does not understand* and St. Thomas concluded that therefore *this man was not to be listened to*.”²⁵

Furthermore, modern science rejected the scientific ideal of Aristotle’s Posterior Analytics, just as Aquinas did. Lonergan says that Aquinas did not allow himself to be caught in the implications of scientific ideal represented in Aristotle’s Posterior Analytics. For Aquinas placed a restriction on the application of the scientific ideal of essential predication, in so far as he kept insisting that we neither know the essence of God nor the essence of the substance of material objects.²⁶

Moreover, Aquinas’s achievement in differentiating the orders of nature and grace, philosophy and theology still lives on and deserves to be pushed further. His distinction between the natural and the supernatural order paved the way for an independent study of nature in which, first, philosophy is studied for its own sake without just serving as a tool for theology, and second, natural science sought for its autonomy, not only from Aristotle, but also from philosophy, and third, that scholarship made it possible to make the history of religions an independent study from theology.²⁷

Lastly, an adequate knowledge of St. Thomas plays a key role for understanding subsequent developments in theology and philosophy. Just as any theologian reading Tertullian need to be acquainted with Stoicism, and those reading Origen need to be acquainted with middle Platonism; just as any theologian reading Augustine has to be acquainted with Neoplatonism and in reading Aquinas needs an acquaintance with Aristotle, Avicenna and Averroes, so also must one know Aquinas in order to understand better the subsequent theologians.²⁸

3.

The ongoing relevance of the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas sets before us a two-fold task: of appropriating the framework of Aquinas and

²⁵ *Ibid.* : 53.

²⁶ *A Third Collection*, 49, 187.

²⁷ *Ibid.* : 36.

²⁸ *A Second Collection*, 137.

transposing his framework in contemporary problematic. Rahner and Lonergan give helpful indications on how one could go about the task of appropriating the framework of St. Thomas's thought.

Appropriating the thought of St. Thomas meant for Rahner the effort to get at the really philosophical event in St. Thomas that remained at the background of his theological works. To grasp the really philosophical in St. Thomas means to join St. Thomas in looking at the matter itself so as to understand what he means. It involves reliving the philosophy itself as it unfolds by taking a definite starting point and abandoning oneself to the dynamism of the matter itself and evaluating the accuracy of one's understanding by constantly checking the progress of development in understanding him against his explicit statements. It involves reconstructing that living philosophy out of which St. Thomas wrote his theology but never articulated in its unity and development, and which rather remained hidden in the silence of his thought.²⁹

To appropriate St. Thomas meant for Rahner posing questions to St. Thomas that have to drive the finished propositions in St. Thomas' writings back to their objective problematic.³⁰

Rahner's appropriation of St. Thomas' thought means more than just assembling and summarizing the relevant statements he made. It involves a creative reconstruction of his original line of reasoning. Such an interpretation of St. Thomas does distinguish itself from the common opinion in scholasticism and it wants its claim of validity to be settled not by invoking the consensus of scholastics, but rather only by a fresh examination of St. Thomas' own writings and of the matter itself.³¹

The task of appropriating St. Thomas demands that we take a specific theme from his writings and follow it up as it unfolds the total viewpoint of St. Thomas on the topic at hand. Rahner carried out this task by taking the theme of Conversion to phantasm as a fundamental phenomenon from which he could unfold the broadlines of Thomist metaphysics of knowledge.³²

Lonergan speaks about his appropriation of St. Thomas in terms of the years he spent "reaching up to the mind of Aquinas." This reaching up to the mind of Aquinas could be understood along the lines of

²⁹ K. Rahner: *Spirit in the World*, trans. W. Dych trans, New York: Continuum, 1994: xlix-l.

³⁰ *Ibid.*: li-ly.

³¹ *Theological Investigations*, Vol. XIII, 14f.

³² Rahner (1994: liif).

the Leonine programme of veteran *novis augere et perficere*, of augmenting and perfecting the old by the new. His studies on Aquinas' *Gratia operans* and *Verbum* led him to penetrate the mind of Aquinas in order to ascertain the *vetera*. The labour of penetrating the mind of Aquinas made him to follow Aquinas through his successive works the variations and developments of his views. Hence he could see for himself how the intellect of Aquinas developed more rapidly on some points and more slowly on others until it reached a position of dynamic equilibrium that continued to drive towards fuller and more nuanced synthesis.³³

To illustrate this developing mind of Aquinas on a specific question of cognitional theory, Lonergan says that Aquinas had a growth in the development of the distinction firstly, between understanding and concept, and secondly, between concept and judgment. He says that if one reads carefully, one will find this development in Aquinas of the distinction between concept and judgment.

In the *Sentences* Thomas hasn't the distinction between concept and understanding. That occurs for the first time in the *De veritate*. In the fourth book of the *Sentences* there may be something like that, but in the clear instance, he is describing an architect, a man planning a city: he has his key idea, his inspiration, and then the unfolding of it—planning various ornaments, buildings and streets, market places and so on—a big layout. Conceiving it is the planning part, but you have to be intelligent to understand how these things will fit together, what would be aesthetic, and all the rest that is the understanding, and he calls it *prima forma*. The other, the product of it, is *secunda forma*, and that Thomas calls the *conceptio* or *conceptus*.³⁴

This development could be seen in St. Thomas's division of inner words. On this division, Lonergan notes "four major works of Aquinas and a large number of his commentators are silent."³⁵ The works he cited are "the *Sentences*, the *Contra Gentiles*—which [...] mentions definition but not judgment [...], the *Summa* [...] and the *Compendium Theologiae*." As an exception from the other commentators, he says that "Ferrariensis acknowledges the twofold inner word."³⁶ He goes on to say that "four other works of recognized standing divide inner words into the two classes of definitions and judgments, and three of these recall the

³³ B. Lonergan: *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1957: 747f.

³⁴ Lambert et al. (1982: 101).

³⁵ Lonergan (1997: 17).

³⁶ *Ibid.*: 17, note 19.

parallel of the Aristotelian twofold operation of the mind.”³⁷ In addition, “the *De veritate* argues that there is a *processio operati* in the intellect”, which “clearly supposes that the judgment is an inner word, for only in the judgment is there truth or falsity”, and he goes on to stress that “while Aquinas does refer frequently to the inner word as a *conceptio*, *conceptum*, *conceptus*, [...] Aquinas employed it to denote judgments” and that inner words correspond mainly to reality, which is divided “into essence and existence.”³⁸

The task of appropriating St. Thomas demands that one learns to practise introspective analysis of one’s cognitional and volitional acts. Lonergan was convinced that it is only through a personal practice of introspective analysis of our cognitional acts that we can understand that *intelligere* means understanding for Aquinas. The contention of Lonergan’s *Verbum* study is that to follow Aquinas in catching up the point that *intelligere* for him means understanding, “one must practice introspective rational psychology; without that, one no more can know the created image of the Blessed Trinity, as Aquinas conceived it, than a blind man can know colors.”³⁹ In other words, “it is only through a personal appropriation of one’s own rational self-consciousness that one can hope to reach the mind of Aquinas.”⁴⁰

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Coupled with the task of appropriating St. Thomas’ thought is the task of transposing his framework into the burning issues of our time. The transposition of the framework of Aquinas into the horizon of a modern person’s consciousness was a task that Rahner and Lonergan set to themselves.

Rahner said explicitly that his intention of doing a historical study on St. Thomas in his *Spirit in the World* was conditioned by the need to transpose St. Thomas into the framework of contemporary problematic. He says that his aim of getting away from so much of what was called neo-scholasticism to return to St. Thomas himself was to “move closer to those questions which are being posed to contemporary philosophy.”⁴¹ For this reason a “confrontation of modern philosophy

³⁷ *Ibid.* : 17.

³⁸ *Ibid.* : 17.

³⁹ *Ibid.* : 24.

⁴⁰ Lonergan (1957 : 748).

⁴¹ Rahner (1994 : xlvii).

from Kant to Heidegger with Thomas⁴² remained at the background of the work. The problem of modern philosophy, which he means here is the critical foundation of metaphysics and the question of man and knowledge God as an integral part of general metaphysics.

This intention of transposing the framework of Aquinas is indicated in Rahner's paper, *Thomas Aquinas on the Incomprehensibility of God*. In this paper Rahner undertook a two-fold task. In the first part he set out to "speak about this teaching in Thomas himself 'historically', to say something about this teaching as it is given in his writings. Then in a second part, leaving Thomas behind, as it were," Rahner tried "to translate this teaching into the self-understanding of a contemporary man [...], to speak about the incomprehensibility of man and of God in a way that seems appropriate for a contemporary man,"⁴³ thereby showing "that the ultimate that we can still say about man even today is just what Thomas had already known with admirable clarity and sobriety."⁴⁴ Paul Ricoeur describes this procedure of Rahner's as satisfying "the most fundamental rule of any hermeneutics, that is, that the interpreter transfers and translates the meaning of a work of the past into the language of his own time, by doing so, acknowledges and preserves the distance between this past and his present."⁴⁵

In describing Rahner's transposition of St. Thomas J. B. Metz said that Rahner's "*Spirit in the World* uses a Thomistic metaphysics of knowledge explained in terms of transcendental and existential philosophy to define man as that essence of absolute transcendence towards God insofar as man in his understanding and interpretation of the world respectfully 'pre-apprehends' (vorgreift) towards God."⁴⁶

Lonergan considers what he did in his book *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* to be a transposition of the framework of Aquinas which he has appropriated through the years of labouring to reach up of the mind of Aquinas. His *Insight* is "an independently elaborated system of thought" in which he imports Aquinas' "compelling genius to the problems of this later day."⁴⁷ What he has done is a transposition of Aquinas' framework to answer the problems posed by both seven

⁴² *Ibid.* : lii.

⁴³ K. Rahner: 'Thomas Aquinas on the Incomprehensibility of God', *Journal of Religion Supplement*, 1978 : 107.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* : 107.

⁴⁵ P. Ricoeur: 'Response to Karl Rahner's lecture: 'On the Incomprehensibility of God'', *Journal of Religion Supplement*, 1978 : 126.

⁴⁶ Rahner (1994 : xvi).

⁴⁷ Lonergan (1957 : 748).

centuries of modern science and the critical problem raised by modern philosophy since Descartes and Kant. His transposition of Aquinas's framework is able to provide a synthesis of modern science and modern philosophy, develop a critical metaphysics and a philosophy of God that are verified in the psychological experience of the cognitive fact of knowing, objectivity and reality in response to three basic questions: What do I do when I am knowing? Why doing that knowing? What is known when I am knowing?

Loneragan notes that Aquinas' *Summa theologiae* aimed at providing a single coherent set of principles "relevant to every question that might be raised" in theology, while the *Contra Gentiles* explicitly aimed at "the manifestation of Catholic truth and the exclusion of opposite errors."⁴⁸ Lonergan' *Method in Theology* transposes the aim of the *Summa theologiae* for a coherent set of principles into creating a fundamental method based on the four levels of conscious intentionality whose specification in theology as functional specialties provides a coherent set of operations need to settle any question that might arise in theological reflection. This same fundamental method transposes into a methodical theology the concerns of the *Contra Gentiles*. A methodical theology operates on the basis of a heuristic structure that enables one to determine the positions and counter-positions of theological understanding and affirmation.

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A commitment to St. Thomas that is characterized by the two-fold task of appropriating St. Thomas's framework and transposing it into a contemporary context would argue a "case for developmental Thomism", in a sense differentiated from William A. Wallace's.⁴⁹

William Wallace means by "developmental Thomism" the Thomism as developed after the death of St. Thomas. He distinguishes this form of Thomism from "historical Thomism, the Thomism of the thirteenth century." Developmental Thomism results from the dialogue that Thomists or those trained in the Thomistic tradition engage in with every philosophical current of interest. The fruitfulness of this dialogue is the development in philosophical and theological thinking that helps to keep Thomism alive. But this has its validity if the "de-

⁴⁸ *A Second Collection*, 45 f.

⁴⁹ W. A. Wallace: 'The Case for Developmental Thomism', *Proceedings of The American Catholic Philosophical Association* XLIV, 1970: 1-16.

velopers” are kept honest, if they preserve the purity of St. Thomas’ teaching and do not corrupt it by foreign influences. He argues that the phases of renewal in Thomism arose as reactions to the failure of developers of Thomism to make their developmental Thomism authentic by preserving the purity of St. Thomas’ teaching. Now one could go further and ask if Wallace’s criteria for an authentic developmental Thomism that preserves the purity of St. Thomas’ teaching is “purely Thomistic.”

Rahner and Lonergan argue for a developmental Thomism that claims to be an authentic Thomism, without conceding to the mistaken view that a developmental Thomism can only be authentically Thomistic when it takes “on the appearance of a mummy that would preserve for all time Greek science and medieval common sense.”⁵⁰ For Rahner a developmental Thomism can claim to be Thomistic if “it begins with the starting point given by Thomas” and developmental if “such starting points given by Thomas will be pushed further by one’s own thought” in such a way “that the historically accessible fragments of his philosophy can really become philosophy.”⁵¹ Rahner understood his developmental Thomism to be of the kind “which shares the objective concerns of contemporary philosophy and which joins Thomas in looking first at the matter itself, and only then at the formulation which is found in Thomas.”⁵² And Lonergan’s developmental Thomism is authentically Thomistic since it has been able to piece “together from Thomist writings a sufficient number of indications and suggestions to form an adequate account of wisdom in cognitional terms”, which Aquinas seems not to have “treated explicitly.”⁵³ Just as Aquinas’ *emanatio intelligibilis* gives an account of the rational process “that made explicit what Augustine could only suggest”, so is Lonergan’s analysis of our levels of conscious intentionality an authentic development of Aquinas who “did practice psychological introspection and through that experimental knowledge of his own soul arrived at his highly nuanced, deeply penetrating, firmly outlined theory of the nature of the human intellect”,⁵⁴ although he did not elevate the introspective analysis “into a reflectively elaborated technique.”⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Lonergan (1957: 401).

⁵¹ Rahner (1994: 1).

⁵² *Ibid.*: lii.

⁵³ Lonergan (1957: 407).

⁵⁴ Lonergan (1997: 104).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*: 6.

To conclude, the commitment of St. Thomas discernable both in the thinking and in the explicit formulation of Rahner and Lonergan lies in appropriating and developing the position of St. Thomas in order to answer the questions posed today concerning the human person's knowledge of himself, of his being in a world and of his relation to God, the incomprehensible mystery, in whose presence St. Thomas was inspired to say: *adoro te devote, latens Deitas, quae sub his figures vere latitas.*