

could perform such roles. Again her persistence was rewarded and her community, the Medical Mission Sisters, was canonically established in 1936.

In 1945, she published the first written work on mission theology by an American Catholic woman. The mission theology of this work is marked by its holistic and incarnational emphases. She was insistent about the interrelatedness of the body and spirit, and of social analysis and spirituality. Among the striking contributions to mission theology in that work is Dengel's observation that while people were to see the goodness and compassion of a self-giving and all loving God reflected in the sisters' services to the people of India, yet, "The people must never get the idea that conversion and baptism are necessary to reward your devoted care" (*The Mission Apostolate* [New York: Paulist Press, 1945] 3-4). Also, not to be overlooked was Dengel's careful connecting of injustice, illness, and poverty with the religious critique of social structures. She wrote that the medical missions were an act of restitution by the "white race," who owed a debt "to peoples subjected and exploited by our forefathers." (Dengel, 5).

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METHOD IN THEOLOGY

- Topic: Rahner and Lonergan on the "Natural-Supernatural" Distinction
 Conveners: M. Shawn Copeland, Marquette University
 Richard M. Liddy, Seton Hall University
 Presenter: J. Michael Stebbins, Gonzaga University

Karl Rahner's theory of divine grace is generally considered the standard account. Nevertheless, J. Michael Stebbins finds Bernard Lonergan's less well-known writings on the topic "more adequate and compelling" and with more practical applications. For Rahner, God has created the world in order to share himself with it. This divine initiative cannot be conceived as having merely juridical or moral force; it must make a real, intrinsic difference in those beings who are called to union with God. The immanent, ontological difference this makes to human nature is what Rahner calls the "supernatural existential." This gift is "conscious" not as an object but as a modification of our transcendentality, an aspect of the unthematic subjectivity that accompanies all of our spiritual acts. This is strictly a gift; it does not belong to and is not demanded by nature as such. Nonetheless, it is an intrinsic constituent of concrete human nature as it actually exists in history. Rahner's well-known analysis of nature as a "remainder concept" follows from this analysis.

For Lonergan grace is also primarily the divine self-gift. From this gift there results in persons a "created communication of the divine nature" allowing creatures to relate to God in himself through the habit of charity and the light of

glory. Grace is a created proportionate and remote principle whereby God is attained in himself. This understanding is situated in the light of the Trinity. There are two *uncreated* communications of the divine nature, namely from the Father to the Son and from the Father and the Son to the Spirit. The created communication of the divine nature, in turn, is the means by which creatures participate in this life of the Trinity. The Son and Spirit are sent to inaugurate and confirm what Lonergan calls a "good of order"—the mystical body of Christ, the Kingdom of God—whose principal constitutive element is a set of "new interpersonal relationships" between human beings and the Persons of the Trinity.

At the same time, Lonergan provides a detailed metaphysics of the levels of being within which one can understand the disproportion between any divine self gift and the levels of "natural" being. Even when as in the later Lonergan one begins from interiority and religious experience, there is still need for a metaphysical analysis of the relations between different grades of being in order to show why the state of otherworldly love and the acts that flow from it are gratuitous. Thus, while every higher level of being is relatively supernatural with respect to lower levels, all capacities and acts by which creatures either are oriented to or actually attain the infinite God *in se* are *absolutely* supernatural to any finite nature. Grace is gratuitous, then, principally because it is utterly disproportionate to any need or merit of any possible creature.

At the same time, the supernatural order does not suppress our properly human intelligibility, our human capacities and activities. Rather, grace extends the reach of our intellect, liberates our will and fulfills our desire to know and love in a superabundant way. Although there is a radical discontinuity between the supernatural order and all other grades of being, that is not the whole story. The order of the finite universe admits of emergence, development, novelty, what Lonergan calls "vertical finality." This "upthrust" is a characteristic not so much of isolated individuals, but rather "seems to operate through the fertility of concrete plurality." By analogy, Lonergan says, a "concrete plurality of rational beings have the obediential potency to receive the communication of God himself: such is the mystical body of Christ with its head in the hypostatic union, its principal unfolding in the inhabitation of the Holy Spirit by sanctifying grace, and its ultimate consummation in the beatific vision."

The principle example of the emerging character of the universe is found in the emergence of insight. Only later are insights formulated in concepts. Rahner's exclusive attention to concepts makes one wonder whether he really appreciates the prime human analogate for the emerging universe loved and redeemed by God. It is Stebbins's sense that Rahner—despite his absolutely clear commitment to doing away with the old extrinsicist account of nature and grace—has not made as clean a break with a certain conceptualism and essentialism. Thus, in order to account for real human openness to God's call, Rahner has to postulate instead a supernatural modification of each individual human nature. Moreover, Rahner's language regarding this modification sometimes suggests an almost reified notion of essence as an unspecifiable something in an unspecifiable

metaphysical interior of the human person. It is a reality in "the inmost depths" of the person, "in the depths of the essence," "in the deepest part of ourselves." Are these indications of a not completely overcome essentialism?

In Stebbins's judgment, these tendencies contribute to Rahner's overly cautious assessment of our ability to distinguish the natural and the supernatural. He has abandoned the two-story universe for good, but his method does not sufficiently illuminate the interaction of nature and grace within the one created world order. This hampers our ability to speak with sufficient clarity and accuracy about the manner in which God's presence can be discerned and cooperated with in the concrete circumstances of human living. Far too many Christians still experience a palpable gap between the faith they profess and their lives at work, at home, and in the community. It is primarily for their sake that Stebbins believes Lonergan's articulation of the natural-supernatural distinction ought to be given a more serious hearing than it has so far received.

This paper seemed to be well received. One comment concerned the created communications of the divine nature being rooted in the Trinitarian relations. Several questioners asked whether every act of self-transcendence is Spirit-generated. The ensuing discussion distinguished between individual acts of self-transcendence and the horizons within which those acts take place—which horizons can be, but need not be, Spirit-generated. One commentator noted that Rahner's writings often seem "Hegelian"—with the frequent invoking of the "deep within" of things and persons. Lonergan on the other hand is more under the influence of Newman where the "performance" of concrete judging, deciding and acting are central.

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COMMUNICATION THEOLOGY

- Topic: Music as an Expression of Theology and Communication
 Convener: Frances Forde Plude, Notre Dame College, Cleveland
 Moderator: Eileen Crowley-Horak, Union Theological Seminary, New York
 Presenter: Tom Boomersshine, United Theological Seminary,
 Dayton/Lumicon Productions
 Respondents: Thomas Beaudoin, Postdoctoral Fellow,
 Theology Department, Boston College

The arts provide special ways of knowing and distinct modes and languages for doing and expressing "theology." To Karl Rahner, "theology cannot be complete until it appropriates [the] arts as an integral moment of itself." This session explored music as a particularly apt mode of theology in 'the digital era.' Boomersshine dates the era from the early 1960s when TV became dominant and