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**THE NATURE OF BELIEF IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF
ALVIN PLANTINGA AND BERNARD LONERGAN**

-A PROPAEDEUTIC FOR AN EXTENDED SYNTHESIS-

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INTRODUCTION

Alvin Plantinga and Bernard Lonergan are well-known among philosophical scholars for two main reasons: the developments they brought to epistemology, and also their interest in entering into dialogue with various philosophers that, while not always atheists, would propose ideas and trends that would be detrimental to Christian thought.

All philosophical endeavour is ridden with controversy, but all controversy seems to stem back to the type of epistemology a person adheres to. In the contemporary context, epistemology becomes the battle ground of all philosophical ideas. There is an endless array of questions that boggle the mind when one tries an honest inquiry into them: How do you know what you know? Do you really know it? Are you certain? Can you be certain? What are the conditions for knowing? What is knowledge anyway? When you accidentally know something, is it still knowing? Is there any knowledge not an accident in a contingent world? How do you go about knowing? What is it that you do when you know? What is it that you know when you seek more knowledge? etc.

Both philosophers, Alvin Plantinga and Bernard Lonergan, were very aware that in order for the Christian message to be accepted as respectable in the philosophical community, one must first propose an epistemology that would justify the rationality of belief in God, and also would, without appealing to ad-hoc arguments, provide a proper way of knowing the world around us, all reality as such. In saying this I am using the

words “justify” and “world around us” in a naïve way, that would probably make both philosophers unhappy, as we shall see later. Plantinga’s central opus *God and Other Minds, Reason and Belief in God* and the “warrant” trilogy and Lonergan’s central works *Insight* and *Method in Theology* are their attempts to provide an epistemological structure for Christian thought.

But epistemology is a a very large field, and as I previously said, ridden with controversy. Is there anything lacking controversy in epistemology? Probably not. But one thing that the vast majority of philosophers would agree to would be that “belief” or “believing” is a necessary condition or component for “knowledge” and “knowing”. Of course even this has been brought into question.¹ But neither Plantinga or Lonergan have dismissed the act of belief from their epistemology. And since the aim of this thesis is to put the two philosophers in a dialogue across philosophical and theological traditions and methods, one coming from Reformed theology and analytic philosophy, and the other from Catholic theology and transcendental Thomism, we would be happy to identify that their first point of agreement resides in realism: belief or believing is a necessary condition or component of knowledge or knowing and, knowing is aimed at truth.² This is not of course a tremendous amount of progress, if any at all, because

¹ see Katalin Farcas, “Belief may not be a necessary condition for knowledge”, in *Erkenntnis*, 80, (2015) pp. 185-200 ; also B. Myers-Schulz, & E. Schwitzgebel “Knowing that P without believing that P.” *Noûs*, 47, (2013), pp. 371–384

² We can speak about three forms of realism: metaphysical, epistemological and doxastic. The metaphysical sets the tone: *a*, *b*, and *c* and so on exist, and the fact that they exist and have properties such as *F-ness*, *G-ness*, and *H-ness* is (apart from mundane empirical dependencies of the sort sometimes encountered in everyday life) independent of anyone's beliefs, linguistic practices, conceptual schemes, and so on. The epistemological is the one which maintains that the ontological can be known, we know things not just ideas about things. The doxastic is to be understood as either a necessary condition for the epistemological one, or if not, as a

most philosophers would agree with it, but it is a modest start. And precisely because doxastic acts represent something fundamental to human experience, to the way we generally speak about how we approach reality, as is a manifestation in general of human experience and not only a conceptual construct pertaining to philosophy, one inadvertently would come to believe something about beliefs and believing, even if considering this a trick of language.³

There are some guiding questions that lurk behind this research and will be driving it forward. The first set of questions ask about gathering the information we need to have an accurate picture of the conceptual frameworks of the two philosophers: How do the two philosophers understand the notion of belief? What sort of ancillary notions are associated with it? What kind of questions and what kind of challenges that the two philosophers trying to address that yet correspond? What is the place of belief in each philosophical framework of the two philosophers?

The second set of questions address a possible synthesis between the contributions brought to philosophy by Plantinga and Lonergan: What is the place of the doxastic notions used by Plantinga in the epistemological system of Lonergan, if any? What is the place of doxastic notions used by Lonergan in the epistemological system of Plantinga, if any? Can a common doxastology arise at the end of it? What would it look like

an intentional state of the psyche towards the real. This should be understood in distinction from idealism where it's the ideas that are believed and known. This should be the working definition of realism through the thesis.

³ This will become more clear as the thesis proceeds. This observation regarding the fundamental level at which belief stands is based on the necessity of belief for knowledge in Plantinga's philosophy, and on the practical fact that human history is a an interaction and a dialectic of beliefs at the level of common-sense in Lonergan's appreciation.

and what sort of approximations would be necessary to make it work if possible? Can the input of one philosopher bring improvement to the contribution of the other? Can we obtain a Lonergan-Plantinga extended synthesis or something legitimately approximating it?

With these questions in mind, a rather rudimentary way of treating the subject will emerge. In the first chapter I will present as faithfully as possible Plantinga's epistemology, his doxastology, and describe a little the interactions he had with some contemporaneous philosophers on the topic. The first subchapter will try to make clear Plantinga's vocabulary, especially of some idiosyncratic usages of terms.⁴ This seems to be necessary because various idiosyncrasies reveal both what is behind a more obvious articulation of thought, and how Plantinga approaches and departs from various philosophical and theological systems. The second subchapter of the first chapter will attend to Plantinga's trilogy on warrant. I will try to extract from it what is relevant to the topic at hand but also I will try to identify the place of the topic, namely, "belief", in the great Plantinga project - so to speak. In the third subchapter I will try to identify the ways in which Plantinga is ready to adapt his system when faced with interactions from other philosophers and what are the ways about which he feels strongly, such that they cannot suffer nego-

⁴ For example Plantinga doesn't like the label of "reliabilism" applied to his own epistemology because it is associated with other types of reliabilism, but according to any standards it's a reliabilist account of a special kind. He makes a distinction within foundationalism - rejecting the classical and accepting the Reidian. He rejects the term justification as being the kind of quantity that together with truth and belief would amount knowledge, because the term justification has juridical and deontological connotations. On the other hand, he accepts the term warrant, which also has juridical and deontological connotations also but he chooses not to be bothered about that.

tiation. Identifying the flexible points and the inflexible points will be revealing of Plantinga's overarching project but will also be necessary in constructing a synthesis that would be as accurate as possible to Plantinga's intent.

The second chapter will do the same with regard to Bernard Lonergan. The first subchapter will be an overview of Lonergan's epistemology and some central notions regarding his project. The second subchapter will zoom-in on the very notion of belief in Lonergan's earlier work *Insight*, while the third subchapter will do the same with Lonergan's later work *Method in Theology*. The fourth subchapter will introduce the contributions that Robert Doran made to the Lonerganian project⁵. These contributions regard the development of the notion of "psychic conversion" and the introduction of some deep psychology notions. This subchapter is also meant to show the openness or flexibility of Lonergan to contributions that would enrich his own.

The third chapter will be the most speculative of all. I will try to draw together all the data gathered in the previous two chapters and attempt to make of them a composite whole. For this I will use some heuristic tools, as permitted by what we learn from the two philosophers. In the first subchapter the heuristic tool will be a binary system "belief-disbelief" centred on the "believer." It will be used to map out potentialities at different levels of consciousness. The second subchapter will introduce the notion of horizon of awareness as a missing link between existential-phenomenological approaches to belief and conceptual-propositional approaches to belief. Our notion will allow us to

⁵ These contributions were made with Lonergan's approval according to scholars who knew them, and verbally testified to me about it. These were conversations with Dr. Gilles Mongeau, SJ, who happens to be a friend of Robert Doran as well, and with Dr. Joseph Schner during my two year stay in Toronto, 2018-2019. As we'll further show in the thesis, testimonial beliefs are justified in certain conditions, according to both Lonergan and Plantinga.

clarify the semantics of the notion of belief and hopefully will dissolve the differences between the approaches of Plantinga and Lonergan. The third subchapter will explore the interplay of the doxastic states and other psychological states and how this interplay serves the process of self-transcendence arising from the pure desire to know. This last chapter will suggest the form of a possible synthesis of Plantinga and Lonergan.

The appendix, *The Catholic project of Natural Theology meets Reformed Epistemology*, while not part of the thesis proper, can be read as a stand alone essay. It is meant to show that there are other venues of contact and possibility of dialogue and synthesis between Alvin Plantinga and Bernard Lonergan than the very narrow topic concerning the notion of belief: namely, the larger topic of natural theology and practical Christian apologetics. This will provide the larger context in which the thesis proper can be understood, but it is also intended to be a bridge for Catholic-Reformed mutual enrichment.

Throughout the thesis and of course in the conclusion, I will not be shy to refer to various implications that various philosophical treatments have for the Christian faith, religion and spirituality. This is in line with the projects of both Christian philosophers. Plantinga's paper *Advice to Christian Philosophers* not only makes this attitude and practice permissible, but mandatory: "Christian philosophers, however, are the philosophers of the Christian community; and it is part of their task as Christian philosophers to serve the Christian community. But the Christian community has its own questions, its own concerns, its own topics for investigation, its own agenda, and its own research

program.”⁶ Therefore, the treatment of belief in this paper will be particularized to Christian faith when and if proper circumstances arise.

CHAPTER 1.

THE NOTION OF BELIEF IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF ALVIN PLANTINGA

1.1. PLANTINGA’S PHILOSOPHICAL VOCABULARY

The philosophical world of Alvin Plantinga can be particularly daunting and confusing, being filled with strange notions that don’t always mean exactly what they mean to other people. Various strange beasts like “properly basic beliefs”, “*sensus divinitatis*”, “justification”, “warrant” make their appearance next to strong polemics against “classical foundationalism”, “evidentialism”, “coherentism”, “internalism” and more friendly attitudes towards forms of ‘reliabilism” and “externalism.” Keeping apace with what all these umbrella terms mean and how Plantinga understands them in his nomenclatural idiosyncrasies is a part of the task in understanding the place of the notion of belief in his work.

Classical foundationalism (henceforth CF) is to be understood as an epistemological model that holds that some beliefs are foundational, namely those which are self-

⁶ Alvin Plantinga: “Advice to Christian Philosophers” in *The Analytic Theist* (edit. James F. Sennett) , (Grand Rapids/ Cambridge UK, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1998, p.298

evident and incorrigible⁷ and those pertaining to internal perception (beliefs about how one is appeared to⁸), and they are not accepted on the basis of other beliefs, and the rest of the doxastic edifice is built upon this foundation and the beliefs that are supported by other beliefs receive warrant from those as long as the support is not circular. Or, CF holds that “A belief is acceptable for a person if and only if it is either properly basic (i.e., self evident, incorrigible or evident to the senses for that person), or believed on the evidential basis of propositions that are acceptable and that support it deductively, inductively or abductively.”⁹

We will see that Plantinga accepts that some beliefs are foundational, in the sense that they are warranted without getting warrant from other beliefs. However he rejects CF because 1. He thinks that there are more beliefs that somebody can rationally hold as foundational other than those which are self-evident and incorrigible and those about how one is appeared to; and because 2. He maintains that CF is self-referentially incoherent since the belief that CF is true is neither properly basic, nor is it in any way clear how it is supported by beliefs that meet such conditions.¹⁰

By accepting that some beliefs are foundational, a rejection of “epistemological coherentism”¹¹ (henceforth EC, to be understood as distinct from “alethic coherentism”

⁷ Self-evident and incorrigible beliefs such as the logical law of identity $A=A$.

⁸ If something appears to me greenly, I believe that something appears to me greenly. This is not identical with the belief that something green is in fact out there in the external world, but only that I perceive something to be green whether there is something green or not.

⁹ A. Plantinga: *Warrant and Proper Function*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1993) p.182.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*

¹¹ Plantinga just calls it Coherentism. I chose to specify which kind for clarity of concept.

or the coherence theory of truth) is implied, since EC is the epistemological model that holds that every belief is rationally justified if and only if it is coherent with other beliefs. Other than maintaining that some beliefs are foundational, Plantinga has a second objection to EC: the coherence between different beliefs is neither necessary or sufficient for warrant.¹² We see here that Plantinga's critique is directed against a harder version of coherentism, that we can call doxastic coherentism as represented by Sellars and Davidson, in which there are no stipulated adaptations or exceptions for "evidence" such as is seen among softer coherentists.¹³ This is important in understanding the position of Plantinga regarding the nature of belief; since a belief is assent to a proposition, the logical coherence between propositions must be investigated as to find out what beliefs are justified. Justification is a low bar for Plantinga, being unable to offer warrant and hence true knowledge; but we'll go back to Plantinga's nomenclatural distinction between justification and warrant later.

Not falling under the umbrella of CF or EC, where does Plantinga choose to reside? He calls it Reidian foundationalism (henceforth RF), after the Scottish philosopher

¹² A. Plantinga: *Warrant: The Current Debate*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1993) p.66 sq.

¹³ see hard coherentism as represented by Donald Davidson: "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge." in Ernest LePore, ed., *Truth and Interpretation: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson*. (New York: Blackwell, 1996); also Willfrid Sellars. "Givenness and Explanatory Coherence." *Journal of Philosophy* (1973) 70: 612-624,; see soft coherentism or coherentism with caveats as represented by Keith Lehrer "Justification, Coherence, and Knowledge." *Erkenntnis* 50: 243-257. (1996) or Lawrence BonJour. "The Dialectic of Foundationalism and Coherentism." in John Greco and Ernest Sosa, eds., *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell 1999)

Thomas Reid, also called the “common-sense philosopher.”¹⁴ Thomas Reid rejected radical scepticism and even Humian scepticism, rejected Cartesian rationalism and Berkley’s idealism. Indeed, he continued to affirm alongside most medieval and ancient predecessors that knowledge is more readily available than we might be inclined to doubt. At the foundation of knowledge is common-sense. Common sense is not to be understood as in today’s popular usage as the kind of thing you bludgeon your political opponent for not having, although it could be. Rather, common sense should be understood in a more technical way as *sensus communis*: “If there are certain principles, as I think there are, which the constitution of our nature leads us to believe, and which we are under a necessity to take for granted in the common concerns of life, without being able to give a reason for them — these are what we call the principles of common sense; and what is manifestly contrary to them, is what we call absurd.”¹⁵ This common-sense is common in two ways, all functional people have it, but it is itself a sort of intersection of all senses and of other experiential acts, and thus represents something common to all of them, including reasoning and judging: “We ascribe to reason two offices, or two degrees. The first is to judge of things self-evident; the second to draw conclusions that are not self-evident from those that are. The first of these is the province, and the sole province of common sense; and therefore it coincides with reason in its

¹⁴ Ryan Nichols and Gideon Yaffe: "Thomas Reid", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/reid/>>.

¹⁵ Terrence Coneo, René van Wouderberg: *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Reid*, Cambridge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 85

whole extent, and is only another name for one branch or one degree of reasoning”¹⁶

The valuing of common-sense as foundational to epistemology, can further be found in other realist philosophers like G.E. Moore in his paper *A Defence of Common-Sense*. But what is the point of commonality in the common-sense of the mixed interior and exterior senses: the undifferentiated experience? Of course, we are talking about an act of which rests in a doxastic act. And what are these doxastic acts that are at least to be conceived, at a first approximation, as co-present with common-sense in a functional person, although not logically identical with it? They are those acts that can be properly basic beliefs.

Unlike CF who says that one can only hold basically a belief if and only if one believes it on the basis of the experiential propositions that support it, (or if it is one of those incorrigible beliefs like believing in the law of identity or non-contradiction), RF maintains that one doesn't need to believe in the experiential proposition in order that there would be a justification for believing that the experience is true. For example: If *it appears to me that I see a lion*, and the other conditions for warrant are fulfilled (conditions that we'll discuss more thoroughly in the following chapter), I am justified to believe that *there is a lion there*, not only that *it appears to me like there is a lion there*, nor do I have to first believe the proposition that *it appears to me that there is a lion* before I believe the proposition that *there is a lion there*.

It may not seem like a big difference, but I think it is one of the most important in understanding Plantinga's conceptualization about the nature of belief and its place in

¹⁶ Thomas Reid: *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man—A Critical Edition*. Edited by Derek R. Brookes. Edinburgh, (UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2002) p. 433

the epistemic apparatus. The reason this is important is that it short-circuits the distance between mind and thing, in a way that undercuts in some regards Cartesian doubt and skepticism. What one believes is the real, what one knows is the real, if certain conditions for warrant are in place. In the tradition of analytic philosophy this is of course construed as a proposition, so in this sense the proposition is the real, but this shouldn't be understood as "the sentence" being the real, but as the content of what is grasped, affirmed and assented to in the doxastic act. Therefore there is no distance between the doxastic agent and the content of reality. This means that already we have reasons to believe that Plantinga locates himself between the two contrary metaphysical families, realism and idealism, on the side of realism.

Furthermore, in arguing for RF, Plantinga also says:

Clearly I can be thus appeared to without believing that I am. It is perhaps impossible that I pay attention to my phenomenal field, and fail to believe that I am appeared to this way (when I am); but I need not *pay attention* to my phenomenal field; I have other things to think about. What counts for the warrant of the belief in question is not my *believing* that I am appeared to in such a way, but simply me being appeared to in such a way.¹⁷

This is again surprisingly enlightening regarding an underlying commitment to Realism rather than Idealism. Believing that one is appeared to this way, rather than an-

¹⁷ A. Plantinga: *Warrant and Proper Function*, p. 184

other is a very abstract sort of belief; one needs to exercise attention to have it. If attention is exercised in observing one's own process of thinking, there is a distance taken from the thing (in my previous example, the lion being there), and back to the contents of the mind, and further to the beliefs that one has about one's self as perceiver. But "belief" is not necessarily a thought. It is something of its own category: it can be embodied in a thought when the content of belief is brought to attention, otherwise, it is just a commitment of sorts of the believer to a reality.

The beliefs that can be properly basic on RF are of course the same two belonging to CF, the incorrigible truths of logic, the beliefs about how one is appeared to, that can be constituted as propositional evidence, but also beliefs that belong to *common-sense*: like the belief that there is a past, the belief that there are other minds, that there is a world independent of our personal mind, maybe some moral beliefs or beliefs concerning aesthetics, and of course, the most controversial, the belief that God exists.¹⁸

When it comes to the belief that God exists, this is acquired through the means of *sensus divinitatis*, another notion of great importance to Plantinga's philosophical vocabulary. As William Lane Craig notices, Plantinga uses the same term used by the reformer John Calvin but with a different connotation, so we can identify this as one of Plantinga's nomenclatural idiosyncrasies:

When the French Reformer spoke of an innate sense of divinity, he meant an awareness of God, just as we speak of a sense of fear, or a sense of foreboding,

¹⁸ These beliefs could be construed as Nicholas Wolterstorff's "control-beliefs" but "control-beliefs" is a broader category which can contain a larger series of worldview-like beliefs that by being assumed, or presupposed, can drive method and investigation and the proper criteria for theorizing. see Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Reason within the bounds of religion*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998)

or a sense of being watched. But Plantinga takes him to mean a cognitive faculty akin to our sense of sight, or sense of hearing, or sense of touch. Nothing in Calvin supports the idea that we have a special inborn cognitive mechanism that produces belief in God. Now, as Plantinga reminds us, the model is Plantinga's, not Calvin's.¹⁹

It is worth noticing that either by misinterpretation or by a set of inexplicit rational inferences Plantinga departs from the most obvious understanding of how Calvin uses the term and he approaches more something that Thomas Aquinas means by *sensus dei* that when afflicted by the fall darkens but still confers *scientia confusa* about God.

It is this, alongside other developments, and presumably an eirenic hand towards scholasticism, that made Plantinga to rename his "Reformed Epistemology" - the Aquinas-Calvin model (henceforth AC-model).²⁰

As for the other mentioned terms, justification, internalism, externalism, reliabilism and proper function —they are so interconnected with the treatment of what Plantinga calls warrant, that they can be understood only in the context of his treatment in the *Warrant* trilogy which is the next subchapter.

1.2. THE NOTION OF BELIEF IN THE *WARRANT* TRILOGY

¹⁹ William I. Craig: *Religious Epistemology*, at url:<https://www.bethinking.org/truth/religious-epistemology>

²⁰ Plantinga says "As a matter of fact, I think Calvin and Thomas Aquinas, are very close on matters epistemological, in particular on matters concerning the epistemology of Christian belief. In *Warranted Christian Belief* I propose a model under which specifically Christian belief can have warrant and to note that concord I call it the Aquinas-Calvin model." in A. Plantinga, "Afterword" in *The Analytic Theist*, p. 354.

The Warrant trilogy, namely *Warrant - The Current Debate* (1993), *Warrant and Proper Function* (1993) and *Warranted Christian Belief* (2000)²¹ takes us on a journey from accounting the challenges of various epistemological models to affirming one that presumably, if successful, resolves all those challenges and identifies as a solution, broadly speaking, the Christian worldview understood philosophically.

What is intended to be meant by warrant? *WCD* informs us that the notion of warrant is that 'whatever precisely it is, which together with truth makes the difference between knowledge and mere true belief'²² and goes on an exploration of various philosophical proposals of what that may be and Plantinga's interaction with them.

What precisely is warrant according to Plantinga? *WPF* gives us an approximation in the nature of warrant as:

We may say that a belief B has warrant for S if and only if the relevant segments (the segments involved in the production of B) are functioning properly in a cognitive environment sufficiently similar to that for which S's faculties are designed; and the modules of the design plan governing the production of B are (1) aimed at truth, and (2) such that there is a high objective probability that a belief formed in accordance with those modules (in that sort of cognitive environment) is true; and the more firmly S believes B the more warrant B has for S.²³

²¹ these titles will be henceforth abbreviated as *WCD*, *WPF*, and *WCB*.

²² A. Plantinga: *WCD*, p.3

²³ A. Plantinga: *WPF*, p.19. This is summarized another way in *WCB*, p.156, as "Put in a nutshell, then, a belief has warrant for a person S only if that belief is produced in S by cognitive

This is a very composite concept of what warrant is, and it seems to be created by a step by step circumvention of the weak points of other accounts for justification or warrant. It still remains a term of epistemic appraisal²⁴ a positive evaluation, a rightness with regards to belief, a way of speaking about a particular belief as being acceptable, proper, approvable or up to standard. But the way that Plantinga regards the concept of warrant is different in several ways from a sort of property of belief such as is justified by another belief present in the internal discourse of a doxastic agent.

Plantinga's exploration trilogy begins with an investigation of internalist accounts for warrant, meaning those which are wholly dependent on the internal and dutiful exercise of one's epistemic faculties - this being able to confer warrant to a belief. Plantinga identifies Locke, Descartes and Chisholm as representatives for internalism. "According to Locke and Descartes, epistemic justification is deontological justification. And here they are clearly thinking of subjective duty or obligation; they are thinking of guilt and innocence, blame and blamelessness."²⁵ Plantinga considers internalism in its various variables reducible to 3 motifs:²⁶ A. epistemic justification is totally up to me and within my power; B. for a large class of epistemic duties, the subjective duty is identical with the objective duty; C. one is justified to hold beliefs that one subjectively perceives

faculties functioning properly (subject to no dysfunction) in a cognitive environment that is appropriate for S's kind of cognitive faculties, according to a design plan that is successfully aimed at truth. We must add, furthermore, that when a belief meets these conditions and does enjoy warrant, the degree of warrant it enjoys depends on the strength of the belief, the firmness with which S holds it."

²⁴ Roderick Chisholm: *Theory of Knowledge*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1977) p. 5 sq

²⁵ A. Plantinga: *WCD*, p. 19

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 19, 22.

as being those to which the person has access, such that one holds them by fulfilling a duty. From these three motifs Plantinga sees the notions of deontology, justification and internalism interlinked, such that justification is a deontological notion that inherently leads to an internalist position. This seems to be such that the bridge between the doxastic agent and reality is still not created, and knowledge cannot be secured since even if all the epistemic duties are fulfilled, such that the person is not guilty, it could still be the case that knowledge is not achieved. Post-classical Chisholmian internalism changes the goal-posts of epistemic duty from achieving epistemic excellence (acquire truth and avoid error) to believing reasonably and avoid unbelieving unreasonably. Plantinga has no qualms that one should proceed to do that, however he points out that justification construed that way is a low bar, such that it doesn't amount to warrant, mostly because it doesn't take into account epistemic environments, or, I would say, the cases of equally reasonable explanations for empirically equivalent facts.

Coherentism, of which we already spoke briefly is another case of internalism, since it refers to the coherence of a set of person-dependent beliefs in a system and the non-doxastic circumstances don't matter. Paradoxically, Plantinga notices, "Coherentism is a very special case of foundationalism: the variety according to which the only source of warrant is coherence"²⁷ Plantinga uses the example of a man who losing the memories of half his life, would still hold coherent beliefs but without warrant. Furthermore, he says that "A belief can get warrant from another belief A by way of being believed on the basis of it, but only if A already has warrant. No warrant originates in this

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 80

process, whereby warrant is transferred from one belief to another.”²⁸ Coherentism by claiming warrant only in the coherence, becomes divorced from circumstantial reality, and can be reduced to seeing which system of beliefs is logically coherent so, reduced to having beliefs about beliefs, and thus being stuck in the dualist mind without any access to actual reality. Just like the previous forms of internalism, the mind-reality gap doesn't seem to be bridged.

Another form of coherentism, namely Bayesian coherentism, conceives coherence in probabilistic terms. Its aim is a very modest one, that of rationality and not of warrant. From this form of coherentism, Plantinga accepts that beliefs come in degrees. However, he will not agree that these degrees are measured alone by probabilistic coherence with other beliefs; that would be again to be stuck in an internalist model, which should be rejected for reasons offered above.²⁹ Rather, the degrees of belief could depend on other factors like proper function, or environmental circumstances etc.

At the border between internalism and externalism, Plantinga places Pollockian quasi-Internalism. Alvin Plantinga characterizes Pollock as a quasi-internalist³⁰ in terms of modern epistemological schools, by which he means to say that he observes two directions from which justification comes into Pollockian epistemology, which seem to Plantinga almost to constitute a schism. Firstly, Pollock sees the production of beliefs, especially perceptual beliefs as an internalized pattern of behaviour that we follow auto-

²⁸ A. Plantinga: *WPF*, p.178.

²⁹ A. Plantinga: *WCD*, pp. 159-161

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 162-181

matically, like riding a bike. But, by contrast, most epistemic norms are not acquired nature, but a priori nature, by which is meant that the norms that govern our reasoning are directly accessible to our automatic processing systems without us making any judgments. That is why Pollock sees himself as an internalist, but Plantinga takes issue with that. Why “quasi”? Because Pollock is not only seeing justification as following norms in a deontological fashion as internalized, but also because these norms have to be followed by someone who has reliable “*automatic processing mechanisms*” which would make him a reliabilist - externalist. This description seems fair enough for me, but I think that what Pollock is doing is not quite a schism, or a doctrinaire impropriety for epistemologists, but rather the vestige of using the creation of an AI³¹ as a thought experiment (and not only) for the construction of a viable epistemology. Surely, granting the AI reliable belief making mechanisms, that it could use automatically is what makes quasi-internalism plausible. Nevertheless, one still needs to affirm that warrant comes from both the fact that the automatic processes are functioning properly, that the design plan was good, and that the appropriate environment for the design plan is that which is explored, none of which Pollock takes into account. Pollock proposes defensible reasoning as proper method for justifying perceptual beliefs as being rational. Plantinga adopts defensible reasoning as a way to show a posteriori the rationality of perceptual belief, but insists that perceptual beliefs are held rationally in a basic way without having their rationality shown. Pollock presents a quasi-internalist epistemology, which is a mix between internalism and reliabilism, while Plantinga offers an externalist epistemology with the

³¹ AI refers to artificial intelligence.

theological undertones which he develops in his other works where the Designer meant us for truth.

This takes us closer to notions and models that Plantinga is more sympathetic to: Alstonian justification, Dretsikian reliabilism and Goldmanian reliabilism.³² William P. Alston's account of epistemic justification while making no claim that it is sufficient for warrant, suggests that a belief is justified if the doxastic agent has adequate grounds accessible for believing a particular proposition and lacked sufficient overriding reasons to the contrary. By grounds one could mean other beliefs, but also direct experience as in the case of perceptual beliefs. Dretsikian reliabilism, while intended to address only perceptual beliefs, and not a priori knowledge, proposes that a belief is warranted if the person believes it and if the right probability relations hold between the belief in question and other significant beliefs such that the other beliefs are to be sources of information that could cause or causally sustain the perceptual belief. Plantinga sees this account as insufficient because some perceptual beliefs at least cannot be quantified in probabilities (i.e. Susie is jogging...how would one calculate the probability of that?) and because it fails to pay explicit attention to the proper function of our cognitive equipment. Lastly, Goldmanian reliabilism holds that "the justification status of a belief is a function of the reliability of the relevant type of process or processes that cause it, where at a first approximation reliability consists in the tendency to produce a belief that is true rather than false".³³ Plantinga rejects it as being a sufficient account for granting warrant to a belief, by using the thought-experiment of the "Epistemically Serendipitous Lesion,"

³² *Ibidem*, p. 182-208

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 199

where there is such a quirky lesion that causes somebody to believe that they do have indeed a lesion, but alongside this accidentally correct belief it causes them to hold a series of false beliefs, and one also doesn't have any evidence for the existence of the lesion. The problem is that reliability is reduced by Goldman only to reliability of a process or a faculty, but it is not extended to the whole person in the context of a design plan as Plantinga does in *WPF*.

Plantinga's account of proper function as constructed in the *WPF* has many things in common with the previous accounts of reliabilism, in fact it could easily be said that it takes part in the reliabilist family. The main distinction however is that the pivot point of the epistemic evaluation is the person, the doxastic agent understood as a person created by a good God, with the ability to know the world, rather than some narrowly defined faculty, or group of abilities that the person has, or processes that the person engages in. He says: "a belief has warrant for you only if the segment of the design plan governing its production is directly rather than indirectly aimed at the production of true beliefs (and an addition to that effect must be made to the official account of warrant)."³⁴ The exploration of Plantinga in *WPF* speaks about the doxastic faculties of a person in terms of proper function, and proper function is construed in terms of normativity. Normativity, in turn, is spoken of in terms of a design plan and a proper environment. The design plan is construed as a good plan but not necessarily as a maximal plan, and the design plan can contain functional multiplicities meaning the same bit of behaviour can serve different purposes. Plantinga continues his exploration showing

³⁴ A. Plantinga: *WPF*, p. 40.

that beliefs about oneself -identity beliefs , one's past - memory beliefs, other persons - the belief in other minds, and what they communicate to us - testimonial beliefs, alongside perceptual beliefs and a priori beliefs can be held in a properly basic way, if the structures of proper function are in place.³⁵

Of interest is also Plantinga's thesis that propositions are not concrete,³⁶ meaning they are not brain inscriptions or sentence tokens or anything of that sort. Rather, they are abstractions of whatever is real, independent of the grasp of human mind. If minds wouldn't exist, the proposition *minds don't exist* would be true, even if no mind would think about it. Interestingly, the defence against the concreteness of propositions is meant to assure epistemic realism, rather than conceptualism. However he continues to say that it is conceivable that abstract objects could stay, metaphysically speaking, in causal relation - which by other measures would mean they are concrete objects.³⁷

Plantinga, however, is not bothered by that fact, because they are in their own category mediating knowledge, without being concrete inscriptions in the human mind, leaving thus the mind divorced from reality, or the kind of thing with no causal power such that in certain regards it cannot summon up the assent of a doxastic agent when the conditions for warrant are present. I am ready to say that this is the most ambiguous and idiosyncratic position that we can find in the *WPF* volume.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 135-136

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p.180.

³⁷ Some philosophers, like William Lane Craig for example, hold that by definition abstract objects are such that they don't stand in causal relation to anything. The number 3 does not cause anything, the set of all odd numbers don't cause anything, the sphere doesn't cause anything. Unless having an existential referent they are causally effete. see William Lane Craig, *The Kalam Cosmological Argument*, (Oregon: McMillan Press. 1979)

Holding that propositional evidence is a second level of evidence, Plantinga determines that beliefs concerning probability, as the belief in the likelihood of a proposition being true, given the truth of some other propositions in support of it, can justify that belief, so that we can affirm its rationality, but by the very nature of probability it can't be sufficient for warrant. When the sources of warrant are others than propositional evidence, like memory, perception, induction, the deliverances of reason, we can speak of first level sources for warrant. When it comes to induction as source for warrant, Plantinga circumvents the mind-in-here/world-out-there dualism and proposes as a solution to the problem of induction, proper functionality: "what makes it right to form a belief in that inductive manner is just the fact that that's the way a properly functioning human beings forms beliefs; and what makes projectable properties³⁸ projectable is just the fact that properly functioning human beings project them." ³⁹

Lastly, in an almost tongue-in-cheek way, Plantinga addresses the dilemma in which a naturalist⁴⁰ is put in, regarding conceptualizing proper function as a source of warrant. On the one hand, a naturalist speaks easily of function and dysfunction in terms of normativity when it comes to scientific facts like mechanics or biology. But if one is an epistemological naturalist, one needs to have a supernaturalist ontology that would ensure proper function as part of the design plan of the Designer. On the other hand, if one is a metaphysical naturalist, one cannot affirm proper function as a criterion

³⁸ like the property of being observed at 10 am, and the property of being observed with one eye etc.

³⁹ A. Plantinga: *WPF*, p. 136

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 215

for knowledge, which reduces all knowledge to opinion. Therefore if proper function is necessary for knowledge, and it seems that it is, and knowledge is possible and it seems that it is, naturalism is a mistaken model.

In the last volume of the trilogy, *WCB*, Plantinga drives his project home with the particular aim of showing that Christian belief is warranted. For this some new sources for warrant are introduced, that are not specifically mentioned in the previous two volumes, such as the *sensus divinitatis* and the testimony of the Holy Spirit. This volume is published in year 2000, seven years after the previous two, but between them Plantinga had the chance to respond to the critiques of his epistemology, and to tweak his system before giving his final word. This will be the topic of the following subchapter.

1.3. TWEAKING THE SYSTEM: PLANTINGA IN DIALOGUE.

Mid-way between the publishing of the first two volumes of the trilogy and the last one, Plantinga had the opportunity to measure the accuracy of his proposed model by responding to objections and critiques coming from over a dozen of epistemologists. This work was published in 1996 as *Warrant In Contemporary Epistemology: Essays In Honor of Alvin Plantinga* , a volume edited by Jonathan Kvanvig.

Firstly, what is noticeable from his interaction with the other philosophers is Plantinga's admission that some of his notions while of practical use and intuitively understandable, are not necessarily very precise when it comes to their nature. Take the example of proper function: "The idea of proper function is one we all have; we all grasp

it in at least a preliminary rough-and-ready way; we all constantly employ it."⁴¹ He does already give us some direction of what conditions need to be met for proper functionalism to be viable: proper function of faculties, appropriate environment, segments of the noetic structure are reliably, directly rather than indirectly, aimed at truth or verisimilitude, absence of defeaters for that particular belief, and sufficient firmness (a quantitative attribute of belief, degree of conviction) with which one holds the belief. But each of these notions are equally intuitive and not very precise. Let us take for example the condition for appropriate environment. Broadly speaking a belief has warrant if it is formed by cognitive faculties in the kind of environment appropriate for those faculties to know the truth. Peter Klein offers this example to challenge Plantinga's account of warrant;

Jones believes that she owns a well-functioning Ford. She forms this belief in perfectly normal circumstances using her cognitive equipment that is functioning just perfectly. But as sometimes normally happens, unbeknownst to Jones, her Ford is hit and virtually demolished – let's say while it is parked outside her office. But also unbeknownst to Jones, she has just won a well-functioning Ford in the Well-Functioning Ford Lottery that her company runs once a year.⁴²

Peter Klein's example seems to fit the broadly defined criteria that Plantinga set out for warrant. In order to address this issue Plantinga tweaks the system by dividing the world, because of externalist, realist convictions, rather than dividing the faculties as an

⁴¹ see Jonathan Kvanvig (ed): *Warrant In Contemporary Epistemology: Essays In Honor of Alvin Plantinga*, (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers. 1996) pp.VII-IX

⁴² Peter Klein: 'Warrant, Proper Function, Reliabilism and Defeasibility' in J. Kvanvig, *Warrant...* p. 105

internalist would be inclined to, namely he will speak of the appropriateness of the environment by distinguishing between the big environment and the small or immediate environment, or how he calls them, cognitive maxi-environment and cognitive mini-environment.⁴³ “S knows p, on a given occasion, only if S’s cognitive mini-environment, on that occasion, is not misleading – more exactly, not misleading with respect to the particular exercise of cognitive powers producing the belief that p. So the conditions of warrant need an addition: the maxi-environment must indeed be favourable or appropriate, but so must also the cognitive mini-environment.”⁴⁴ So in order to avoid having just a serendipitous true belief, but rather having a warranted belief, a mentally healthy Jones needs not only to be in a universe which allows her to believe correctly that she owns a functioning Ford, but she also needs to be present in the environment and witness the destruction of the previous Ford and the winning of the next one.

There are other things that I identify as suboptimal with Peter Klein's example. The main thing is that it's a belief about a universal and not about a concrete object. Namely, “Jones believes that he owns A well-functioning Ford” rather than “John believes that he owns THAT well-functioning Ford.” The problem is construed wrongly from the beginning, in an idealist way, in that knowledge is about ideas and thoughts instead of being about things. What he knows is an idea, not a thing. The ways that particular idea can be true is either if it's a properly basic belief or if it's believed on the basis of correct evidence. The belief that one owns a Ford is not a properly basic belief. In

⁴³ A. Plantinga: ‘Respondeo’, in *Ibidem*, pp. 307-378

⁴⁴ A. Plantinga: ‘Warrant and accidentally true belief’, *Analysis* 57 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 144

that case it's a belief that formed because of propositional evidence: That evidence may be that Jones believes that he owns THAT Ford. If formed another way, the belief that he owns A Ford has no warrant, in fact it may be the result of improper function. The fundamental mistake is that behind the example lurks an idealist, anti-realist, framework. In Aquinas and Augustine⁴⁵ the divine ideas in the Divine Mind are illuminating the human mind and they are participating ontologically in the created, material things. What human mind knows is the material things, not the ideas as in Platonism. Once a quasi-Platonist framework is accepted, or a Cartesian one or a Kantian one, it will make it impossible to bridge the mind to the thing. The way that Plantinga chose to deal with this idealist problem and to ground belief in concrete existence was by making the external mini-environment along-side proper function sources for warrant. The other interactions⁴⁶ that Plantinga has with William Lycan, Keith Lehrer and Laurence Bonjour, coherentists themselves, who have belief-centred epistemologies (rather knower-centred epistemologies) seem to me to be reducible to the same underlying issue: underneath it all, beliefs are conceived as grasping essences but not existences, although there are always caveats.⁴⁷ Richard Foley's proposal for defining knowledge as accurate and comprehensive enough belief,⁴⁸ a sort of epistemic modesty, is again reducing belief to a proposition, proposition to an internal thought. His proposal is, in the end, indistinguishable from reducing knowledge to true belief but his observation comes surprisingly

⁴⁵ St. Thomas Aquinas: *Summa Theologica*, I,84.6

⁴⁶ in the same volume J. Knavig, *Warrant...*

⁴⁷ In the case of William Lycan, he is ready to accept that he holds perceptual beliefs which he calls spontaneous in a basic way via the principle of credulity. See *Ibidem*, p. 17

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p.87 sq.

as a support for Plantinga's notion of degrees of belief and also in support of the criterion of proper mini-environment, by affirming in the context of Gettier's "barn problem" that "having beliefs about things in the near-by vicinity is insignificant in comparison with having true beliefs about the thing in front of you."⁴⁹

With these interactions in mind Plantinga moves to the final volume of the trilogy, *WCB*, and he makes amendments to his previous model, for example by a robust incorporation of the mini-environment clause: "A belief B produced by an exercise E of cognitive powers has warrant sufficient for knowledge only if MBE (the mini-environment with respect to B and E) is favourable to E."⁵⁰ But other than employing the new tweaks in the system, Plantinga particularizes the system to refer to Christian belief. Can one will himself to believe? Plantinga considered that one can train dispositions for right belief but one cannot will the very act of belief. Which of course makes sense in as far as the operation of judgement is the home of belief, the place of epistemic decisions, while the will's home is in the free action, decision to act, that can take into account the prior beliefs or not. Plantinga says "I can train myself not to assume automatically that people in white coats know what they are talking about; I can train myself to pay more attention to the evidence, to be less credulous and gullible (or less cynical and skeptical), and so on."⁵¹ This training of the dispositions for right belief are a strengthening of proper function, but it would amount in scholastic terms to acquiring virtue.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p.94 sq.

⁵⁰ A. Plantinga: *VCB*, p.159

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 96

In *VCB*, Plantinga proposes two models⁵²: the AC model simpliciter, by which he aims to show that theistic belief can be held in a basic way, and the AC model extended, by which he aims to show that Christian belief is warranted.

The AC model simpliciter⁵³ is constructed having in the background the model for warrant we talked about, but adding into the mix the *sensus divinitatis* conceived as a capacity or a set of dispositions to form theistic beliefs in certain circumstances. This capacity resembles perception, memory and a priori belief. The belief in "that which orders what we see" or the natural disposition to believe in God, produces a belief that is properly basic in two senses: it's basic for the person holding it because it is held independently of any evidential propositions, and it's properly basic in the sense that the person holding it violates no epistemic duties. Belief in God produced by the faculty, power or mechanism of *sensus divinitatis* under proper conditions, is warranted because it is part of the design plan and directed at knowing naturally (if not impeded) the truth about God's existence. It can be impeded by sin for example, but that is a dysfunction, therefore the condition of proper functionality is not fulfilled. The belief in God is probably warrant-basic if God (conceived as the good Designer who set forth this design plan with the intention of entering a relationship with Him) exists. It is worth noticing that *sensus divinitatis* is, in Plantinga's appreciation, a faculty, a disposition to believe, and the belief itself. Moreover, external circumstances occasion the belief to arise into awareness but they don't cause it; rather it is programmed in the design plan.

⁵² "Model" by which he means a proposition of a state of affairs such that it would show how such a state of affairs could be true.

⁵³ Ibidem, p. 167-198

The AC extended model⁵⁴ is constructed by holding the simpliciter model as correct and adding to it the contribution of the Holy Spirit who heals the effects of sin, re-establishes the proper functionality of the *sensus divinitatis*, of our cognitive abilities to know that God exists, to know that the Christian story is true but also to our affective abilities to desire God, to love God and enjoy him forever. The belief in God as revealed in Christianity is not the conclusion of some arguments or the weighing of some evidence, or an explanation. It's just as properly basic as theistic belief simpliciter. Christian belief does not get the warrant from beliefs about experience but, rather, like in the context of perception, is occasioned by the experience. Christian belief is immediate. A person is justified to hold it in a basic way; a person is rational to hold it. Moreover, the belief has warrant in the absence of defeaters, in fact it can constitute an intrinsic defeater-defeater to any objection it might have, by the self-authenticating testimony of the

⁵⁴*Ibidem*, p. 241-323

CHAPTER II.

THE NOTION OF BELIEF IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF BERNARD LONERGAN

2.1. BERNARD LONERGAN'S CRITICAL REALISM AND GENERALIZED EMPIRICAL METHOD

Before speaking about beliefs proper, I will situate Lonergan's philosophy in a broader sense. Lonergan's philosophy is a critical appropriation of St. Thomas Aquinas, an appropriation because his intent is to be faithful to St. Thomas Aquinas,⁵⁵ especially in epistemology, by affirming the realist position that we can truly make judgments such that we arrive at truth and objectivity, but critical in the sense that he uses a critique of

⁵⁵ Bernard Lonergan: *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe & Robert M. Doran, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1997) p. 222-223

the mind similar to the one used by Kant. This usage of quasi-Kantian critique applied in the context of Thomistic epistemology made some to consider Bernard Lonergan a “Transcendental Thomist” which would put him in the same category with Joseph Maréchal, Karl Rahner, Otto Muck and Donceel.⁵⁶ The very nomenclature of the “transcendental method” that Lonergan applies to his work served as justification for this consideration. However Lonergan does not want to be thought as creating a synthesis between Thomism and Kantianism, therefore he rejects this umbrella term and in order to avoid further confusion he renames the “transcendental method” as the “generalized empirical method” (henceforth GEM).

GEM is “a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results.”⁵⁷ This should be the method of “science” and should be the method of philosophy, theology and any theoretical pursuit. Notice that the method of science - science understood in the modern way as the body of knowledge acquired by the scientific method - is identical with the method of any theoretical pursuit. It is called a transcendental method because, as Lonergan scholar Joseph Fitzpatrick notices, “it provides the *conditions* that make possible the determinate operations in any field of inquiry, whether in science or history or mathematics[...] or whatever.”⁵⁸ Indeed, its denial “is susceptible to a kind of *reductio ad absurdum* in the form of a contradiction between the content of the denial and the intellectual performance that alone would

⁵⁶ B. Lonergan: *Method in Theology*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1971), p. 13-14

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 4

⁵⁸ Joseph Fitzpatrick: “The notion of belief: Lonergan, Needham and Hampshire” in *Philosophical Encounters: Lonergan and the Analytic Tradition*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 2005) p.52

make such a denial valid,⁵⁹ Moreover, “while it is open to improvement and refinement, it’s not open to a radical revision, since any such revision would entail the employment of the method that is to be revised.”⁶⁰

But what are these recurrent operations that lead to truth and make manifest the authenticity of the knower and how are they to be conceived? The operations should be conceived as expressions of the authentic human person in the process of self-transcendence and they are constituted by four or five⁶¹ levels of consciousness, each with their own operations, exigences and questions, each with their own transcendental precepts, these being norming inner drives which if followed conclude in persons living out their authentic self.

1. The first level is that of empirical consciousness, the operation of experience by which we are *immediately aware* of self, others, by which we sense, we perceive, remember, dream, feel and sense ourselves, the others and the world. This is the level where we are confronted by brute facts or data. At this level, we experience ourselves as having our interest grasped. The areas of interest could be biological, sexual, practical, dramatic, aesthetic, intellectual or mystical. The transcendental precept for this level of consciousness is “*Be attentive!*”, therefore one must avoid distraction in order to gather the relevant data that will be used in the next level. What is grasped in it is

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*

⁶¹ Although earlier Lonergan gives four, later Lonergan seemingly speaks of a fifth transcendental precept “Be in love!”, one could reasonably postulate a 5th level of consciousness in the Lonerganian philosophy. This of course is open to debate, because this precept has no identifiable question connected to it. However I shall refer to it as the 5th level in this paper, for heuristic reasons.

“presentation.”

2. The second level is that of intelligent consciousness. The operation of understanding is the level where the gathered data, or the raw material of experience, are understood, the level where intelligibility is explored and insights are experienced, and essences are conceived of, universals are abstracted from particulars, patterns are understood, the logical laws of identity, non-contradiction and excluded-third are employed. The precept for this level of consciousness is “*Be intelligent!*”. The answers that are asked are of the form: “*What is it? Why? How?*” What is grasped in it are concepts, essences, natures, quiddity, intelligibility, the intelligible unity-identity-whole of individual data.

3. The third level is that of rational consciousness. This is where the operation of verification takes place, where inductive, abductive and deductive reasoning is consciously happening, and where the questions concerning *existence* are asked. This level is aimed at the concrete, the aim is the affirmation of truth, and the result is the belief in that truth, knowledge. This is the home locus of belief, the locus where the affirmation of truth is made. The driving questions are “*Is it so? Is this the truth of the matter? Does it really exist?*” And the possible answers are less diverse than those in the second level: it’s either yes or no. The virtually unconditioned has its conditions fulfilled. Conclusions are drawn. Otherwise the process of judging is not finalized. The transcendental precept is “*Be reasonable!*” What is grasped in it is *existent being*.

4. The fourth is that of moral consciousness. Once a process of judgment is finalized, a moral decision is called for by the question “*Is it worthwhile? Is it desirable? Is it*

good?" This is the level of value, freedom and responsibility where the moral requirement emerges, demanding authenticity and a new level of commitment and an impulse to action may emerge. The precept associated is "*Be responsible!*" What is grasped in it is value.

5. The fifth level, being-in-love, is an even greater commitment, when the whole person with all one's resources is dedicating himself or herself to the good of the other, and to God. The precept is "*Be in love!*". In it you let yourself to be taken to heart by the other or by God.

The precepts themselves are called transcendental because denying them involves a self-performative incoherence but also because when one authentically follows them one is involved in the process of self-transcendence. At each level there is an intensity and a quality of personal commitment distinct in operation from the others, but also each upper level of consciousness sublates the inferior layers.

Changes in direction of commitment towards more authenticity, and away from inauthenticity are rightfully called conversions. One can have an *intellectual conversion*, *moral conversion*, *affective conversion*, *aesthetic conversion*. But one can also speak *religious conversion* which uses the same operations as the previous types but with the object of true religion in aim, or how Robert Doran will maintain, one can speak of *psychic conversion*⁶² as an integration of impulses and various drives and shadows from the layers of deep psychology. All of them are *personal conversion*.

⁶² Robert Doran: *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1990), pp. 254 sq. 630 sq.

2.2. EARLY LONERGAN. 'BELIEFS' IN *INSIGHT*

Unlike Plantinga's work in which almost every other notion revolves around the notion of belief, and by which we can approximate by reverse engineering what is implicated in the notion, Lonergan's work has other aims, so only occasionally do we find him addressing beliefs specifically. And even in most cases the notion is the "naïve" one by which I mean that it is used as the use of common-sense has it; it is the phenomenological use of the term. However, since the basic meaning of belief is the affirmation of the truth of a proposition, we already intuit, at a first approximation, that its proper home is at the third level of consciousness, as the result of the operation of judgment, if not for any other reason than because it is intrinsically related to the process of knowing. However, the act of judgment, when appropriated in an aware state is an act of reflective understanding which contains more sub-operations: verification, weighing the evidence, considering counterfactuals etc. Sometimes it happens that the belief arises, or the assent to a proposition, without the process of judgment being fully appropriated; yet the beliefs are true, rational and justified, and maybe even warranted. Is it the case that belief leaves its proper home and wanders off into the other levels of consciousness?

The act of judgment or the act of reflective understanding has its own general form: "To grasp evidence as sufficient for a prospective judgment is to grasp the prospective judgment as virtually unconditioned. Distinguish then between the formally and the virtually unconditioned. The formally unconditioned has no conditions whatever. The

virtually unconditioned has conditions indeed, but they are fulfilled.”⁶³ To say it another way, the formally unconditioned is what is logically and metaphysically necessary, while what is virtually unconditioned is a possibility that has the conditions for its actual existence met. An insight arises from the act of reflective understanding, and, if no further questions arise on the same issue, the insight is invulnerable - there could be further questions that lead to further insights, but not on the same issue. If there are questions on the same issue the insight is vulnerable. This is an operational distinction that is immanent within our cognitional process. The conceptual distinction between mistaken and correct insight arises after. But prior to the theory of correct insights, there is a theory of correct problems, of the right set of questions that need answering. These are variations of the same questions present in the description of the levels of consciousness. In this instance, however, they need to be applied specifically to the nature of the issue under investigation.

Of course, people also believe things without grasping the virtually unconditioned. Sometimes they don't think what questions are to be asked. Still, they do seem to be reliably functional when they do so, as if the meaning of being is mediated through an environment that has its own exigences. Lonergan says that this is the realm of common-sense mediated obviously by common-sense meaning. There are other realms like the realm of theory and science, the realm of interiority where the process of self-appropriation has its proper place, the realm of transcendence and the sacred, and the realm

⁶³B. Lonergan: *Insight*, p. 305

of art.⁶⁴ In the realm of common-sense undifferentiated consciousness begins to develop, ordinary life, ordinary language, the realm of our immediate interaction with the world. The judgments of common-sense are most elementary, everyone regards them as obvious and indisputable. There are two sources of common-sense judgments: the proximate and the remote. The proximate source is our personal and immediate judgments of fact, concrete analogies and generalizations. The remote source is the diffusion of judgments by tradition, transmission, communication, testimony, collaboration.⁶⁵ The objects of common-sense are things in relation to us born out of pragmatic interest, as distinct from the object of theory and science which concerns things as they relate to themselves. "Human collaboration that results in a common-sense involves belief [...]. The type of belief is that of a pupil who believes the teacher only that later he himself may understand[...]"⁶⁶ This belief based on testimony, arising in the realm of common-sense is a usage that connects belief to social interaction. And this is not an accident; Lonergan's usage of the term is consistently related to collaboration. As he says: "The general context of belief is a sustained collaboration of many instances of rational self-consciousness in the attainment and dissemination of knowledge. The alternative to collaboration is primitive ignorance. But the consequence of collaboration is symbiosis of knowledge and belief."⁶⁷

The process of true belief is outlined by Lonergan as containing the following

⁶⁴ For a systematic treatment of the 'realms' in Lonergan see Fellows of Woodstock Theological Centre: *Realms of Desire*. (WashingtonDC: Georgetown University, 2011)

⁶⁵ B. Lonergan: *Insight*, pp 314-315

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 317

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p.728

stages.⁶⁸

1. Preliminary judgments on the value of belief in general, on the reliability of the source for this belief and on the accuracy of the communication from the source.

2. A reflective act of understanding in the virtue of the preliminary judgments, grasps as virtually unconditioned the value of deciding to believe some particular proposition.

3. The consequent judgment of value.

4. The consequent decision of the will.

5. The assent that is the act of believing.

One could come to believe something false following the same process, but that would happen due to some dysfunction either in the cognitive apparatus of the subject or due for example to a lie or general bias or counter-positions in philosophy etc.⁶⁹

Some observations are in order: these stages make it seem that Lonergan subscribes to doxastic voluntarism, a position rejected by Plantinga who considers that one can train his disposition to believe something, even that some beliefs can be initiated because of that training, but there are plenty of beliefs that just form seemingly without the participation of active will, by a sort of independent belief-making mechanism. The second observation is that the value judgment is central to the belief process. It differs however from other value judgments because it is not about the good of the senses,

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, p 731

⁶⁹ All these will qualify as mini-environmental pollution in Plantinga's account for warrant.

will, or the moral good, but rather the good of the intellect, not in general, but as the intellect is directed to that particular belief that is to be found worthy to be accepted and communicated. This is very curious because it makes it seem like the locus of belief is at an interplay between at least two levels of consciousness at the same time: the third and the fourth, judgment and value, maybe between them, maybe within both of them.

Or maybe, and this is my suggestion, the locus of belief is diffused at all levels of consciousness, but the stages proposed by Lonergan regard his usage of “belief” only in the context of collaboration. Lonergan is very consistent with this rather idiosyncratic usage. He continues to use it in his Ch. 4.5 ‘Beliefs’ in his later work “*Method in Theology*,”⁷⁰ where he presents the same account given in *Insight* but in a shortened form.

Rodney Needham, the anthropologist, in his book *Belief, Language and Experience* attacked the doxastic voluntarism of Lonergan by insinuating that Lonergan fails to see that people were killed for the failure or refusal to believe. He proposes that an enlarged semantic spectrum of the word belief, as it arises from common usage, would offer a less morally reprehensible implication.⁷¹ Fitzpatrick defends Lonergan saying:

“Lonergan uses belief to indicate the social character of knowledge: not only do we learn from others but we also rely for our judgments and our advancement in knowledge on the immanently generated knowledge of others. Nowhere does Needham advert to this feature of Lonergan’s analysis of belief: anyone reading his book could be excused for concluding that Lonergan’s use of belief refers to any or all the meanings attached to that word.”

⁷⁰ B. Lonergan, *Insight...*, pp.244-250

⁷¹ J. Fitzpatrick: “The Notion...” pp. 55-56

Fitzpatrick response, whether entirely landing on the mark or not, justifies my intuition that doxastic voluntarism should not be read as absolute in the work of Lonergan and also justifies my intention of using an enlarged semantic field of the word belief in this propaedeutic for an extended synthesis. This enlarged semantics of the term will be sufficient enough to include Plantinga's understanding of the term, which is the standard one. But we will also try to situate the functions of the notion within Lonergan's GEM model.

2.3 LATER LONERGAN. 'BELIEFS' IN *METHOD IN THEOLOGY*.

As I already pointed out, Lonergan is consistent with a very narrow use of the term, and also although *Method in Theology* was written two decades after *Insight*, there seems to be little to no development on the topic. However there is an application of Lonergan's understanding of belief to the particular case of religious belief.

He starts pointing out that, among the values, faith⁷² discerns the value of believing the word of religion, of accepting the judgments of fact and the judgments of value that religion proposes. Lonergan understands faith as the knowledge born of religious love.⁷³ And by religious love he understands Pascal's "heart's reasons" and God's love flooding our hearts. This is similar to Plantinga's "*sensus divinitatis*" and "instigation and "inner testimony of the Holy Spirit" in the AC extended model.

But to stay true to belief understood in the context of collaboration, Lonergan

⁷² Lonergan, *Method...*, p 118.

⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 115

considers that no matter how intimate and personal is religious experience, it is still not solitary, but invites community and is nourished by community. The transcendental precept of being-in-love, the fifth level of consciousness makes its appearance:

The dynamic state of being in love has a character of response. It is an answer to a divine initiative. The divine initiative is not just creation. It is not just God's gift of his love, there is a personal entrance of God himself into history, a communication of God to his people, the advent of God's word into a world of religious expression.⁷⁴

An interesting distinction that Lonergan makes between faith and belief, between the 5th level of consciousness and the previous ones, is motivated by a spirit of communal understanding: faith "has the power of unrestricted love to reveal and uphold all that is truly good; it remains a bond that unites a religious community, that directs their common judgments, that purifies their beliefs. Beliefs do differ, but behind the difference there is a deeper unity."⁷⁵

Lonergan's treatment of belief in the specific context of intersubjectivity and collaboration, at the interplay fourth and third level of consciousness, but at the same time with belief defined simpliciter as personal assent to a proposition is not sufficient to direct us to answers for the following types of questions: Where do beliefs go when we don't think about them? Do we still believe when we think about another thing or when we are asleep? Does one believe in God when one doesn't think about God? Am I an

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 119

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*.

atheist when I sleep?. If these questions are answered in the negative, the notion of belief can be understood only in the specific context and as temporarily wedded to conscious thought. If the thought is not there, neither is the belief. But this is not how either common-sense and the standard usage of the term in philosophy would allow us to think about belief. So, the reduced usage is not justified. If we answer in the affirmative, then we still need to see more exactly what is the interplay between doxastic acts and human consciousness and its operations, beyond the conscious judgment.

2.4 ROBERT DORAN. PSYCHIC CONVERSION: DEEP PSYCHOLOGY, ENERGY AND SYMBOL

Lonergan's consciousness model is present from very early in his work, and suffered refinement but no major revision. It reveals that the four levels of consciousness he speaks of are the levels of our conscious experience. However, one does not say that when one is not conscious, one lacks consciousness:

We are not conscious of ourselves except by way of our acts. Moral consciousness of oneself is had only inasmuch as one considers some good that is intelligible but in some way obligatory, deliberates about it, judges and makes a choice. Rational consciousness of oneself is had only in as much as one inquires whether some thing exists or is so, weighs the evidence concerning it and makes a judgment on the basis of evidence [...] Empirical consciousness of oneself is had only inasmuch as one is operating by one's sensitive nature. And we say that someone is simply unconscious when because of physical trauma or be

cause of deep sleep all sensitive and intellectual activity is suspended.⁷⁶

So, what about the unconscious operations of consciousness? What are they and how do they fit in GEM and more importantly what are their relation to doxastic acts or states. This is where the contribution of Lonergan scholar Robert Doran becomes very useful. In many of his writings, and most extensively in his book *Theology and the Dialectic of History*, Robert Doran advocates the introduction of the insights given by the field of deep psychology, the psychology of the things we are not immediately conscious of, the psychology of Freud and Jung. This field proceeds in terms of such notions as subconscious, collective unconscious, dreams, symbols, archetypes, complexes, atavistic memory, notions that today have a successfully wide, popular use, given their plausibility.

The object of the *dialectic of history* is history, and history happens in the realm of common-sense, the realm of human interaction, the realm of beliefs, the realm of human collaboration and conflict, affirmation of the wills of the peoples. History does not happen in the realm of theory, otherwise the party which holds to a political theory that is true and good would be the one to win, and the nation that is involved in a just war would be always the one to win, and what is better will always prevail over what is worse. An analysis of the dialectic of history is nothing more than having a theory of the concrete workings of the common-sense, which is the realm where we first encountered 'belief' in Lonergan; and also the realm from which RF draws its sap.

One might be drawn to consider the unconscious consciousness as driving the

⁷⁶ B. Lonergan, *The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, ed. Michael Shields (Toronto, Toronto University Press: 2002)

realm of common-sense and history, simply because the intelligible, the true, and the just are not grasped always in the events of history and they don't drive them correctly. And knowing that the realm of common-sense is where beliefs have their home according to Lonergan's treatment, it can be reasonably suggested that an extended range of the semantics of 'belief' beyond the one that happen at the interplay between the fourth and third layer of conscious consciousness is justified and faithful to Lonergan's philosophy even if Lonergan's practical use of the term is narrow. This is the hinge argument that if accepted as correct, makes possible an intelligible synthesis between Lonergan and Plantinga's doxastology while remaining relevantly faithful to both their projects.

Returning to Robert Doran, he speaks about what he calls the duality of consciousness. He says:

The data of consciousness are twofold, and that at least an implicit correctness of one set, the intentional or spiritual, is necessary for the correct negotiation of the other set, the psychic. There is a set of data to be understood by deep psychology. It lies in the sensitive flow of consciousness itself, the polyphony or as the case may be, the cacophony of our sensations, memories, images, emotions, conations, associations, bodily movements, and spontaneous intersubjective responses and the symbolic integrations that occur in our dreams.⁷⁷

The psyche has the vertical finality towards participation in the life of the spirit, human being achieves authenticity in self-transcendence. The psychic conversion

⁷⁷ Robert Doran, *Theology...*, p. 46

alongside and concomitant with the processes of intellectual, moral, affective and religious conversion, by which self-appropriation is achieved, is meant to order the psyche: "Psychic order can be understood in terms of *contrasting complexes* of psychic energy that match and provide momentum to, the sustained performance of the same operations."⁷⁸

To put it another way, psychic order is the appropriate form that organizes the matter of our consciousness. In the previous quotation we notice the use of the terms 'energy' and 'contrasting complexes'. Energy can be understood as potential and kinetic. When actualized, set into motion, the psychic energy always takes on a "contrasting complex" but these can be reduced always to *Eros* and *Eris*, concord and discord, assent and dissent, trust and distrust, application or separation, approval or disapproval, attractive or repelling, desirable or undesirable, conjunction or disjunction or any sets of doubles that would parallel these or are isomorphic with them. This energy takes form in the process of judgment as giving the response to the question "Is it so?" as a bare and simple Yes-or-No. But in the operations of the psyche, these are always having various clothes, affective concomitants, volitional concomitants, doxastic concomitants, aesthetic concomitants.

How is one suppose to achieve proper order in the psyche? Doran suggests that: Psychic conversion is a transformation of a psychic component of what Freud calls "the censor" from a repressive to a constructive agency in a person's development. The habitual orientation of our intelligence and affectivity exercises a

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 53. See also Lonergan, *Method...*, pp. 30-31

ensorship over the emergence into consciousness of the images that are the psychic representation and a conscious integration of an underlying neural manifold.⁷⁹

Psychic conversion happens at the level of empirical consciousness and it allows one's own system to be accessed. In addition, it orders ones' affective habits and one's spontaneous apprehension of values, by regulating or ordering the access to the images, informations and energies of the subconscious mind.

But the collective unconscious is also part of the psychic landscape, that can be ordered and self-appropriated. Energies and their concomitants can be energized to our advantage. The integration of Jung's insights within Lonergan's GEM can unleash their potential, in Doran's opinion, when "the heuristic structure of the universal human self will emerge from the interlocking of archetype and insight, where the resources of the symbolic function that Jung was unable to render explicit will be discovered."⁸⁰

The heuristic structure of the universal human self refers to the idea that when trying to grasp the archetypes⁸¹ we are trying to grasp a sort of structural program, open to higher integrations, that is specific to humans and common to all of them, primal symbols that carry energy and set in motion motivations, actions, commitments and upper operations. They are above the pre-psychic inert, opaque, unconscious proper, or the

⁷⁹ R. Doran: *Theology...*, p. 61

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, p.665

⁸¹ We can think of the content of the collective unconscious in different ways: either as populated by a menagerie of characters ("the hero, the priest, the mother, the virgin, the trickster, the child...") or as an universal symbolic language, or even universal human language, containing of course the fundamental directions of concord and discord co-present.

unconscious as Lonergan uses the term. Rather they inhabit the deepest layer of the psyche where energy begins the process of making itself present to itself. It is the layer of the psyche which determines, if properly functioning in the individual, an almost intuitive grasp of how things are, how they ought to be, what is the good of order, what is the danger to it, and an intuitive inclination to act properly with the adequate amount of energy to do so. It is here that the pure and unrestricted desire to know begins to exist and the data that orders our experience is already in place.

CHAPTER III

A PROPAEDEUTIC FOR AN EXTENDED SYNTHESIS

3.1. UNITY AND DUALITY OF CONSCIOUSNESS. ONE SOUL, TWO MOTIONS

One of the best things regarding an exploration in epistemology or doxastology is the immediate access one has to the field of inquiry within one self and the verification readily available within oneself, as per GEM.

I am a knower and I am a believer, I am one who experiences, understands, judges, decides, desires, wills, loves. But I am also one who doesn't know, doesn't believe, doesn't experience, doesn't understand and doesn't decide, doesn't desire, doesn't want, doesn't love. They are not two I's, but one. Yet there seems to be a yes and a no to every conceivable act that I can do, whether epistemic, doxastic, voluntary, emotional, religious or practical. It's also not the case that I cease to exist when I don't believe something or when I don't decide something. Strangely enough, I do experience myself as not experiencing something, I know that I don't know some things, I believe I don't believe a lot of things etc. This is the data of experience, this is presentation.

There is "I" and there are the acts; there are the things I am capable of, and the things that I actually do. What am I doing when I am believing? I give assent to a reality,

to a proposition, I affirm it's truth, I am committed to that fact. I am capable of believing, I believe some things, but I don't believe other things. If I have the ability to believe, what activates it in one case but not in another case? Why is it I believe some things and some others I don't? Maybe because there is an internal disposition to believe some things and not others. In that case we have further division: I have the ability to believe and to disbelieve, maybe I have the disposition to believe some things rather than others, I come to believe some things rather than others by way of process and belief-formation, I do in fact believe some things rather than others, some beliefs I hold more strongly than others, some of my beliefs change over time, others are incorrigible, and others endure over time.

My beliefs present themselves to my awareness when I think about the content of the proposition they refer to. But when I don't think about the proposition, do I cease to believe? In the case of beliefs that are incorrigible or those who endure over time, if I think about the proposition content, five minutes later, one day later, one week later and so on, the belief is the same. I still give assent to the proposition. But the thought that makes it present to my awareness is different than the thought that made the same belief present to my awareness before. Therefore beliefs are not plausibly thoughts; they are a distinct operation, thoughts just make them present to our awareness.

In that case how can we possibly explain the seeming endurance of the same belief between twenty-two different times when it got the chance to be brought into awareness by thought? There are three possibilities: the first, that I have the disposition to form that belief and I form it again at the thought moment, the second that I just remember the belief that I held previously and form it again on the basis of remembering I

had it, or the third I have the belief all the time with me in act but not always present to my awareness. I believe that the first two options are implausible. The first is implausible because the disposition to believe doesn't seem to carry with it specificity of content: one is not disposed to believe that cows moo, and disposed to believe that birds sing and so on, a disposition for each proposition, but rather dispositions should be understood more universally. The second is implausible because there is seemingly a distinction between the memory of one believing that one believed "X is true" in the past, the content of that belief, and the disposition to form that belief again. The disposition to believe that the data of our memory is accurate will cause the belief that "I believe that I remember correctly that birds sing" but not the belief that birds sing. One can believe more strongly that birds sing than in the accuracy of one's own memory. It seems again implausible that the belief could form as having justification and disposition in another belief that has lesser strength than it. And finally, any defence of the first two propositions would include isomorphic arguments for the denial of self-identity-over-time, which is a preposterous belief to have, especially if Christian belief is warrant-basic per the AC extended model, "Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever" (Heb. 13:8).

I believe the third option is most plausible and the only one compatible and common to GEM and the AC extended model. We believe even if we don't think about it. This can help explain the spontaneous working of habits and skills, which seemingly no longer require conscious thought. Belief is not a memory, not a thought, nor is the act of understanding or the process of judging.

Belief is the assent of the unity-identity-whole "I" to the affirmation of truth, falsehood or plausibility of a state of affairs. Disbelief is the dissent of the unity-identity-whole

"I" to the affirmation of truth, falsehood or plausibility of a state of affairs. It is not just the thinking mind, the understanding mind, or any other specified level of consciousness, as per GEM, but it involves the whole human person. Beliefs are intended commitments of "I" to what is true, good and beautiful; a belief is the experience of "I" committing. I am committing because of an internal and unrestricted desire to know, to love, to experience; but that is just a way of speaking. It's not like the unrestricted desire to know, to love and to experience is different than belief: they are psychologically identical but logically distinct. The desire to commit finds its fulfillment and rest in committing, but it is already committing to whatever is the true but unknown from the instant the desire exists.

The unity of consciousness is the experiencing psyche. The duality is the directions of commitment which are identical to the "contrasting complex" that Lonergan and Doran spoke about, that we can even conceive as two motions of the soul within itself: assent-dissent, trust-distrust etc. These two directions are equi-primordial with the unity of the experiencing psyche. It's not that if these two motions don't exist, the experiencing psyche, or the empirical level of consciousness malfunctions: it rather doesn't exist at all. The equi-primordiality of the unity and duality of consciousness is, just like GEM, not subject to revision. Any revision would have to assume it in order to refute it, creating a self-performative incoherence. One cannot experience oneself as dissenting from the postulate that motions of dissent and consent are equi-primordial with the experiencing one. The two states or acts are concomitant with the existence of the experiencing psyche at every level of consciousness. And every act of psychic conversion invokes a change in the direction, either from assent to dissent or from dissent to assent.

3.2 THE HORIZON OF AWARENESS. HIERARCHIES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL PROCESSES

Empirical consciousness, the level at which experience or presentation happens, and which is ordered by psychic conversion, is organized in two ways with respects to awareness: we have conscious experiencing and unconscious experiencing. They are divided by what I will call, for the sake of heuristic modelling, the horizon of awareness. The horizon of awareness is what divides conscious psychological operations, namely those one is aware of in a wakeful and sober state, when one can exercise voluntary attention, according to the transcendental precept: "Be attentive!", and the experiences and states which one is not immediately aware of, such as those investigated by deep psychology. In the act of being attentive there is an application of the senses, of perceptions, of the faculty of observation. This is a commitment isomorphic with what one does when one gives assent in the doxastic act. One could say that one believes that something is worthy of attention, and when this belief is present at the horizon of awareness, one is attentive. This belief is summoned at the horizon by the operation of the senses when something grasps your attention, by spontaneity of emerging thoughts, and the inner drive and energy of the unrestricted desire to know.

As I previously said, thoughts are not beliefs. Thoughts emerge spontaneously

and randomly, like a fireworks display or as rising stars, seemingly with no logical connexion between them, at the horizon of awareness. This spontaneous emergence we shall call '*thoughting*' to distinguish it from 'thinking' which is grasping the pattern of the thoughts and the logical connexions between their content in a sort of continuum and unity. If patterns are grasped, and concepts are used purposefully, one is engaging in the process of understanding. One experiences oneself as *thoughting* and thinking. Thoughts are the vehicles that carry beliefs up to the level of conscious understanding. But the intuitive understanding that resides below the horizon of awareness, things that we understand but we don't think about, is not carried by thoughts. The emergence of thoughts and feelings is what one can observe when one engages in the process of meditation.

At the horizon of awareness one becomes aware of one's own beliefs. And this is the level where one experiences one's own life as a story. But one is not always aware of what one believes, yet it can be learned by applying GEM, by intentionally going through the process of self-appropriation. At the horizon of awareness one is aware of the other, one forms basic beliefs connected to perception, sensory experience and is made aware of previously formed beliefs. The upper levels of consciousness: intelligent consciousness, rational consciousness, moral consciousness are themselves co-present with held beliefs. The rational consciousness and the moral consciousness is more deeply involved in belief formation, while intelligent consciousness is involved in assessing the coherence and intelligibility of the beliefs.

All the upper level of consciousness, while differentiated above the horizon of awareness, they become undifferentiated under the horizon. Here is where memories

are stored and from where they are retrieved (if the retrieval mechanisms are in proper function) to the horizon of awareness. They can be retrieved either spontaneously through “thoughting” or voluntarily through thinking. Here is where our insights lay to rest when we are not using them. Here is where the archetypes of the collective unconscious dynamically motivate our social interaction and energize the understanding of our life’s story. In the penumbra of the horizon of awareness, just below it, there is the subconscious mind, that holds affective energies and personal symbols, the land of dreams, nightmares and repressed traumas. When we dream, images and stories are summoned up to the horizon of awareness to touch it, when we dream lucidly, these images rise above the horizon.

The horizon of awareness is a heuristic tool. One doesn’t need to understand the above levels and the below ones as being spatial, because the psyche is not spatial. They are indeed hierarchically determined, yet they are a series of operating hierarchies of processes happening at the same: for example, with respect to personal commitment: being-in-love, faith, and belief in God understood as trust, are at the top of the hierarchy of self-transcendence while a perceptual belief is at the bottom, requiring little energy involvement. With respect to potential energy carriers and releasers, what is behind motivation and affect, the symbols of the subconscious being personal, carry less than those of the collective unconscious. With respect to our self-appropriation, the conscious operations of the 4 or 5 levels consciousness are superior to the ones that are situated under the horizon of awareness.

Lonergan’s treatment of belief gives us a phenomenological-existential image of it for the specific context, the social sphere, the historical sphere, the sphere of common-

sense, intersubjectivity and human interaction. It's what people do, or a "form of life" as Wittgenstein would say.⁸² They do "believing", they want to be trusted, and they transmit information aimed to be believed. It's happening at the level of common-sense, so belief is about things in relation to us, and not things in relation to themselves. Plantinga is more conceptual in the sense that he using the tool of analytic philosophy. He sees belief as assent to the proposition, and his outrageous counterfactual examples can seem to reduce his treatment to a mere exercise in conceptualizing what is possible, and many things, indeed, an infinite amount, are logically and metaphysically possible. The interplay between what is possible and what is in fact real is brought to our awareness every time one engages in the processes of understanding and judging. The content of our own awareness at the horizon is the object of inquiry, and the beliefs about beliefs that we have is verified in the data of immediate experience. Even more than that, Plantinga, just like Lonergan, gives the realm of common-sense a privileged locus for adequate belief formation, thus centring the belief on the person holding it rather than the proposition; but enough time was spent in the previous chapters pointing out the implications of realism, externalism and Plantinga's brand of reliabilism. Philosophical exercise happens in the realm of theory, but when the object is beliefs, what ones studies is the common-sense. Lonergan was critical about the tyranny of common-sense, but he also saw it as the raw material for philosophical inquiry, by his phenomenological treatment of it. This is inevitable because human existence is psychic existence, and psychic existence is concomitant with the two motions of assent and dissent, and every

⁸² Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, ed. G. Pitcher (New York: 1966) s19, 23 ,241

experience, every act of understanding and judging, every moral judgment is a manifestation of those two motions.

The proper function, as per the AC extended model, is an ordering according to design of the belief-making mechanisms & circumstances such as would be an element in conferring warrant to a belief, especially Christian belief:

1. proper function of faculties according to a good design plan
2. appropriate environment: mini-environment and maxi-environment.
3. segments of the noetic structure are reliably, directly rather than indirectly, aimed at truth and verisimilitude,
4. absence of defeaters for that particular belief,
5. and sufficient firmness (a quantitative attribute of belief, degree of conviction) with which one holds the belief.
6. *Sensus divinitatis*
7. Instigation and Testimony of the Holy Spirit (who heals malfunctions in design, because of sin and directs the soul to loving God and experiencing God's action as love).

The GEM's contribution to this provisional extensive synthesis with Plantinga's system is that it shows what is the form that the segments of the noetic structure need to take in order to ensure their reliability, and this form is that given by the specificity of the working of the five levels of consciousness with Doran's addenda of the inclusion of deep psychology, especially the ordering produced by psychological conversion, and their specific processes engaged in a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive result.

Loneragan's paradigmatic model regarding true beliefs is:

1. Preliminary judgments on the value of belief in general, on the reliability of the source for this belief and on the accuracy of the communication from the source.

2. A reflective act of understanding in the virtue of the preliminary judgments, grasps as virtually unconditioned the value of deciding to believe some particular proposition.

3. The consequent judgment of value.

4. The consequent decision of the will.

5. The assent that is the act of believing.

The input from Plantinga's insights would make for a clearer treatment of what those preliminary judgments would be like. Some of them would be just provisional or probabilistic, but some could be properly basic. Example: the belief that there is a past more than 5 minutes ago would be necessary for the moral belief that someone who committed a crime 5 days ago is indeed morally responsible.

Points of immediate contact between the two systems: Plantinga's *sensus divinitatis* and the instigation and the testimony of the Holy Spirit, correspond roughly to Lonergan's Pascalian "reasons of the heart" and "God's grace & love" in *Method*. These points of contact are specific for religious and Christian belief, and they speak of the self-transcendence of the human being answering the question of ultimate concern which is not merely one of existence but one of commitment and gift of being: "Do you love me, Peter?" (John 21:15). Another point of contact is the absence of defeaters (in AC) and the acts of reflective understanding for figuring out the conditions that need to

be fulfilled (in GEM) in order to affirm the virtually unconditioned. The absence of defeaters is offering to a belief the virtue of being justified by in the absence of other conditions that would impede the granting of warrant.

As for the apparent doxastic voluntarism of Lonergan, explained away by Fitzpatrick as contextual, I think one last remark is in order. Lonergan is a Thomist. For Thomists, the will “is the intellective or rational appetency. The will tends of necessity to the end for which it is made; it tends towards what is intellectually grasped as desirable or good and towards its own happiness or repose in the possession of good. The will is necessitated in its tendency towards good *in general*, good in its common aspects. But the will is not necessitated with respect to *particular* things presented by the intellect as desirable.”⁸³ My opinion is that Needham’s critique of Lonergan as a doxastic voluntarist is mistaken because it conceives the will as some sort of power separated from the intellect. Doxastic voluntarists like Carl Ginet⁸⁴, seem to hold to this narrower meaning of will being a separated power.

The rational appetency of the intellect is goal oriented, towards being grasped as the good. It searches for finality and achievement of a sort of firmness in obtaining what is desired. It doesn’t need to be reduced to a different faculty that spontaneously wants particulars as will seems to be popularly understood.

3.3 BELIEFS AND CONCOMITANT PSYCHOLOGICAL STATES

⁸³ St. T. Aquinas. *Summa T...*, I. 1.82

⁸⁴ see Carl Ginet: *Knowledge, Perception, and Memory* (Kluwer: Academic Print on Demand, 1975)

The unity of consciousness makes it impossible for the levels to operate practically independent of each other. In fact, when the subject is in proper function (as per AC) he or she will need to have all levels co-present and perfectly ordered. Because of this unity some psychological states call into action some others, and various operations. While one may distinguish these operations logically, they are simultaneously operating chronologically; they are concomitant to each other. For example, the remembering of the death of a loved one brings about concomitant sadness (emotional or affective concomitant). Alternatively, the perception of a beautiful work of art can bring about admiration (aesthetic concomitant). Knowledge of the concomitant states within our psyche, can reveal the order or disorder that is within our psyche at the level of unconscious empirical experience. Doxastic acts and states, just like other ones, are not only not an exception, they are the paradigmatic motions of assent or dissent of the psyche; they are co-present with every other state (doxastic concomitant).

Let us look at two thought-experiments, both illustrating psychic concomitants and how a prospective analysis of doxastic acts can be done using both the insights of Plantinga and Lonergan:

Illustration 1: Suppose I am walking through Rome, enter a church, and I see there, unexpectedly, the Pope having a discussion with the parish priest. I am at the same time excited to have the opportunity to meet him. I wait politely for the discussion to end and I ask the Pope for a blessing that he cheerfully gives.

1. I see the Pope. Or the Pope appears to me. This occurs at the sensorial level in the level of empirical consciousness, above the horizon of awareness. It requires

proper function and adequate environment to be a source for warrant.

2. I believe I see *the Pope*. This belief is concomitant with an act of understanding. I know what a Pope is, and my understanding is that he is the successor of Peter, apostle of Christ which Himself is God Incarnate; the Pope is the highest prelate of *my* religion, worthy of *my* respect and consideration. I also know how the Pope looks like; remember that in the sphere of common-sense, things that are considered are not things in relation to themselves, but things in relation to me. This contains memory concomitants.

3. I believe *the Pope is truly there*. This is a properly basic belief.

4. I believe *I see the Pope*. This belief is concomitant with an act of judgment. One of the operations of the acts of judgment is weighing the evidence. Sensory evidence is what witnesses have to offer and if honest on the basis of which they testify. But it comes with the shadow of doubt because it is no longer centred on the object of assent but on the subject. This type of belief is less likely to be concomitant with the first three acts, but rather chronologically posterior.

5. I believe *I see the Pope* or I believe the Pope is seen *by me*. There could be a further distancing from the object of the sensory experience (the Pope) back to the doxastic agent (me). The act of reflexivity makes it improbable of this kind of belief to be properly basic but rather one based on the evidence that "I believe the pope is truly there."

6. I am excited to be seeing the Pope. This is an emotional concomitant with the act of seeing, the belief that I see *the Pope* and with the belief that *truly the Pope is there*.

7. I decide based on what I believe on a course of action (waiting & asking for a blessing.) The decision does not follow logically from the proposition “The Pope is there” but rather from the energetic impulse that a constellation of related beliefs, that I already hold in the cloud under the horizon of awareness, releases. This is the energy and impulse of personal commitment, the assent of the soul.

The beliefs from points (1) to (5) are logically distinct. (2) & (3) are chronologically concomitant to (1). (4) and (5) are chronologically posterior to (2) and (3). (4) are simultaneous with operations of judgment but not with the result of the operations of judgment that is the grasping of being, essence and existence, that is happening in (2) and (3). The operations that pertain to doubt, are chronologically posterior to those which pertain to belief. It seems like belief is a metaphysically necessary condition for the existence of doubt. Further mirroring of beliefs is possible, like “I believe that I believe that I see the Pope” and “I believe that I believe that I believe that I see the Pope” and so on, as the *ouroboros* feeding eternally on itself. But this is possible for three reasons: A. because the first grasp of being is possible, B. because the doxastic act is an act of being committing, assenting, to being C. because being is unrestricted. The reflexive beliefs are co-present. They are not co-present in awareness, but underneath the horizon of awareness.

Illustration 2: I take a spaceship to Pluto, with Richard Dawkins. No human has been there before or sent anything to the surface of the planet. We are the first ones. We arrive. We find a frozen stone surface, and a desolate place all around. There is nothing of interest. Then, we discover a cave. In it, lying in plane sight, we find the 5

Platonic solids made out of solid gold, 3 meters in height, perfectly polished, sharp corner edges, no imperfection in any of them, except that one of the upper corners of the cube is cut off and is set aside on the ground. Furthermore, in the middle of the 5 Platonic solids there is a sphere, made as well out of gold, 3 meters in diameter. It is perfectly polished as well. I immediately form the belief that those objects are artefacts designed by intelligent agents unknown to me. I am concomitantly awe-struck that such thing would be there. Richard Dawkins immediately forms the belief that natural processes such as the random collusion of atoms, planetary activities, solar wind, gravity and such, over a period of long time created this improbable arrangement. He is concomitantly awe-struck to find such a thing there.

We both form different beliefs in the face of empirically equivalent facts. The presentation is the same, but the doxastic act has a different content. Why? Because of bias (which itself is a doxastic act, but disordered). Dawkins holds strongly to the belief that methodological naturalism is the correct epistemology and by it he assumes that inference by means of abductive reasoning to design cannot be made from observing a thing. Whatever it is, as long as it is not designed, he is fine with it, no matter how improbable or preposterous. He is a scientist, he studies things in relation to themselves, I, on the other hand, am a common-sense man. I do form beliefs as things present themselves to me. Yet, if my belief that they were designed has warrant, as per the AC extended model, Dawkins is wrong. We also have identical emotional concomitants but they are attached to different doxastic acts. I would be ready to change my belief if it were shown that generic natural conditions can create these types of formations, just

like basalt columns or snowflakes come to be - and that would be a defeater to my belief. But if the defeater is not present, I am justified to believe what I do. On the other hand, Dawkins' belief in naturalism is held very strongly. It can act as an intrinsic defeater to any sort of evidence that might possibly arise, so the belief in naturalism is psychic censor to everything else.

The processes of psychic conversion, affective conversion, intellectual conversion, religious conversion are meant, as per GEM and the AC extended model, to order the faculties of the self, to their proper ends, in their proper function. And a full awareness of doxastic concomitants could be a guiding light in furthering these processes.

CONCLUSION

The modest purpose of this thesis was to find avenues of dialogue between two philosophers that never met personally, or interacted with each other's work in their published scholarly work, at least to my knowledge. These avenues for dialogue were meant to be a propaedeutic to an extended synthesis, meaning a preparatory work, finding and proposing a common or mixed philosophical vocabulary but staying always faithful to the intentions, the meanings, the methods, the philosophical commitments of Bernard Lonergan and Alvin Plantinga. But the synthesis is not only one of vocabulary or nomenclature, but rather of supplying notions that the other did not develop, but that could act complementarily in achieving a more refined epistemology.

For example the notion of properly basic belief being supplied from Plantinga's

epistemology to Lonergan's seems to refine the account without affecting its integrity. Similarly, Lonergan's layers of consciousness can give a realistic view of the doxastic processes, without in any way afflicting the integrity of the AC extended model. The necessity for proper function and proper-environment is also underplayed in GEM where the concern is the proper use of the operations. However including them in the account does nothing to affect its integrity but rather refines it.

The greatest difficulty faced in this thesis was to make sure there was enough justification to move from Lonergan's narrow and contextual usage of belief (as produced by testimony, tradition, collaboration) and his conceptualization of something that seemed like doxastic voluntarism. If the justification I have given —first coming from Fitzpatrick regarding the contextuality of the usage, and the second regarding the specific use of will as an appetite of the intellect in Aquinas — hold, then I hold that the integrity of the two systems is maintained and the propaedeutic for the extended synthesis is successful.

The first two chapters were a descriptive gathering of notions and occasionally signalling possible avenues of contact. The third chapter made more explicit the parallels, the connections, the complementary points, by means of assuming that both GEM and the AC extended model are correct, or at least accurate enough to be held without epistemic damage by a Christian living in a possible world where Christianity is true.

What is the nature of belief after all this?

The nature of belief is that of a contrasting motion, either of assent to or dissent from being, pervading every level of our consciousness and being concomitant with all its operations, from the unconscious empirical consciousness to the upper level of

transcendent consciousness in the stage of being-in-love, especially being in love with God. Belief in this understanding is both the most fundamental differentiation of the psyche, and also the fundamental drive to self-transcendence.

Could we be wrong about this or under an illusion? I will end with a quote from Lonergan, a rebuke to Kant's idle worry concerning doubts that might arise from the mere possibility of illusion: "Kant spoke of transcendental illusion, and if what he meant has been shown to be a mistake, the expression survives to generate distrust. But it is not the detached and disinterested desire to understand correctly that can be named an illusion, for it is interference with that desire that is at the root of all error. Nor can the unrestricted desire to know be named a transcendental illusion, for there has to exist some illusion before it can be either immaterial or transcendental. Nor can one say that the pure desire exists, that is not illusory, yet in fact is not unrestricted. After all, Kantians and positivists are not deluded but merely mistaken when they endeavour to restrict human inquiry within bounds that everyone naturally and spontaneously transcends."⁸⁵

Further directions of research can easily be drawn after this propaedeutic for an extensive synthesis, and hopefully they will be followed up. This could be an analytic formulation for the things that have been touched here intuitively, an extensive look at both epistemologies, instead of just at the nature of belief, a development from the synthesis in the direction of practical Christian apologetics appropriate for our times. Also, it would be opportune that other Reformed thinkers would enjoy this kind of virtual dialogue with their Catholic counterparts, for example Herman Dooyeweerd whose modal-

spheres are, to my intuition, a more developed version of Lonergan's realms of meaning. Mutual enrichment and refinement is always possible.

APPENDIX

THE CATHOLIC PROJECT OF NATURAL THEOLOGY, AND REFORMED EPISTEMOLOGY

It is very difficult to speak in broad terms about the project of natural theology as it was construed in the Christian tradition, but it is even more difficult to talk about it in narrow terms, by choosing a particular philosopher or theologian's natural theology. One can offer several reasons. One would be for example that the medieval project was not as much one of pure analytic conceptualization but one of synthesis, where people struggled deeply to bring together opinions and ideas that rang true on their own into a system. And hardly anyone had in those times the audacity to claim that they solved all the problems in philosophy. In general, I suppose one could see the project of natural

theology as a simple attempt of reasoning from the world back to its Creator or even from metaphysical concepts that are warranted by the existence of the world back to its Creator. The project of natural theology is complementary in Catholic thought to the project of revealed theology.

There is an old and weighty Catholic history that sees the rudiments of natural theology are in the Scripture: Paul's discourse in Athens in Acts 17, or Romans 1:20 — "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so *that people are without excuse.*" But they also lie in Greek Philosophy, in Plato's knowing of the Good from the Shadows in the Cave, or Aristotle's Nous which is the Prime Mover. The project of natural theology slowly develops, with some reluctance, because the project looked too Athenian for Jerusalem, so to speak. We see its emergence in the thought of John Philoponus, Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius, Boethius, and its "arrival" with St. Anselm of Canterbury's Ontological Argument⁸⁶ and St. Thomas Aquinas with his Five Ways⁸⁷ where the project achieves its seminal synthesis.

So the question is: why do it? In the absence of an atheist movement to respond to, in a Christian world, why go through the trouble of sanctifying reason as means of knowing at least that God exists? It seems rather obvious to me, that the project of natural theology isn't originally an apologetic one, but one of exhortation to extend the bounds of reason to the limit. Secondly, there is a sort of drive to explain how come a

⁸⁶ Anselm: "Proslogion" in *The Major Works*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.)

⁸⁷ see St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Part 1, q 1-24, and *Summa Contra Gentiles* books I&II.

disbeliever is without excuse as Paul claims in Romans 1:20. This second motivation could be a hermeneutical one: trying to show how come disbelievers are without excuse and point out the clarity Paul claims is there. So, in a sense revelation seems to be a drive for natural theology. Thirdly, we must acknowledge the medieval drive to synthesis I spoke of earlier which tried to unite systematically things that seem true to the thinker, for example Aristotelian thought and Patristic theology for St. Thomas Aquinas.

In this story alas and/or God be praised, this direction was not left unchallenged. William of Ockham rejected the classical arguments for the existence of God as granting knowledge that God exists, denied final causation, and but accepted probabilistic inferences. He also denied that theology is a *scientia* but he affirmed that it is a *sapientia*.⁸⁸ But the advent of Enlightenment and Modernism offered even greater challenges. While Descartes himself was a believer and even proposed a variant of the ontological argument⁸⁹, his rationalism implied scepticism about the reliability of senses or experience of the external world, hence undercutting premises in the arguments used in natural theology. Locke, disagreed with Descartes that reason is the end-all and do-all, and proposed one can be sceptical about it and that experience is what should drive knowledge. He also argued that we don't know substances, again undercutting some of the metaphysics necessary for some of the arguments present in natural theology. He, inconsistently though, argued for the existence of God from a variant of the principle of

⁸⁸ Sharon Kaye: "William of Ockham", at *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. URL <<https://www.iep.utm.edu/ockham/#SH6b>>

⁸⁹ René Descartes: "Meditations" in *Selected Philosophical Writings*. trans. Cottingham, John., Stoothoff, Robert., Murdoch, Dougald.(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

sufficient reason.⁹⁰ Soon after, Hume offered another challenge by being a sceptic about induction and our knowledge of causality, therefore undercutting quite a bit of essential epistemology and metaphysics used in natural theology.⁹¹ Inconsistently, he agreed that an argument from design is convincing to show God's existence as Creator but not his attribute of Goodness. Then, Kant came on the scene and moved space and time into the subjective mind, next to causality, undercutting all metaphysics.⁹² Inconsistently, he argued for the existence of God from moral justice.⁹³

Both Ockhamism and Modernism, rejected natural theology, partially or totally, hence they rejected the ability of human reason as a vehicle in achieving the knowledge of existence of God. The counter-reaction of the Catholic Church to this was literally Magisterial. The Canon 2:2 of Vatican I Council states: "If anyone says that the one, true God, our Creator and Lord, cannot be known with certainty from the things that have been made, by the natural light of human reason: let him be anathema." And Canon 4:4 continues: "If anyone says that a human being cannot be divinely elevated to a knowledge and perfection which exceeds the natural, but of himself can and must reach finally the possession of all truth and goodness by continual development: let him

⁹⁰ John Locke: *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975)

⁹¹ David Hume: *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion: The Posthumous Essays of the Immortality of the Soul and of Suicide*. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Co., 1998)

⁹² Immanuel Kant: *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*. trans. James W. Ellington (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1977)

⁹³ Arguably, this appreciation of Kant's inconsistency is my own. While it is true that Kant makes the distinction between pure reason (logic and science) and practical reason (moral and practical judgments), the move from practical reason to the affirmation of being with regards to God seems implausible.

be anathema.” This means that the debate is closed in as far as the official teaching of the Catholic Church goes: there is no doubt that natural theology is possible, its project is orthodox, and its denial is heterodox. However, it can be debated which natural theology is the best one, because presumably, someone can come up with terrible arguments for the existence of God and his attributes.

The place of natural theology in the Reformed tradition can be slightly more confusing. An equal amount of voices seem to be on both sides of the question, some promoting the project and some opposing it vehemently. Some authoritative voices like the ones of the French Confession of Faith attributed to John Calvin, and that of the Westminster Confession seem to affirm the orthodoxy of the project in a similar way to that affirmed by the Magisterium of the Catholic Church. For example, the Westminster Confession states: “Although the Light of Nature, and the works of Creation and Providence do so far manifest the Goodness, Wisdom, and Power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and of his Will, which is necessary unto salvation.”⁹⁴

On the other hand, really influential theologians like Karl Barth and Cornelius Van Til, seem to reject the project for systematic theological reasons, by which I mean, that natural theology does not seem consistent with the theological system they are trying to create or espouse. Karl Barth says:

“The possibility of a real knowledge by natural man of the true God, derived from creation, is, according to Calvin, a possibility in principle, but not in fact, not a

⁹⁴ Philip Schaff: *The Creeds of Christendom* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877), 3:599

possibility to be realized by us. One might call it an objective possibility, created by God, but not a subjective possibility, open to man. Between what is possible in principle and what is in fact there inexorably lies the fall. Hence this possibility can only be discussed hypothetically: *si integer stetisset* Adam (*Inst.*, I, ii, I). Man does not merely in part not have this possibility; he does not have it at all."⁹⁵

Alvin Plantinga, as an authentic representative of the Reformed tradition and of the clarity aimed at by the analytic philosophy, keeps the locus of natural theology in this tradition where it was: the confusing place. In *God and Other Minds*⁹⁶ Plantinga provisionally argues that the traditional formulations of the theistic arguments do not succeed in showing conclusively that God exists. He also goes on to show that the atheistic objections to theism are unsound. If left at that, this would be a zero-sum game, justifying rationally only religious scepticism or agnosticism, but neither theism and atheism. Thus, Plantinga proposes that the limits of rationality are not those of propositional evidence or direct experience; they are broader. By giving the example of the belief in other minds, another known philosophical problem, Plantinga proposes the rational parity argument: If one is rational to believe in the existence of other minds, one is rational to believe in God. He goes first to show that any argument that can be erected in demonstrating the existence of other minds, can be refuted by the same arguments that originally were objections to theistic belief. Plantinga wants the same standards to be

⁹⁵ Karl Barth: *NO!*, in *Natural Theology*, ed. John Baillie (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2002), 106

⁹⁶ Alvin Plantinga: *God and Other Minds*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967.)

applied consistently when it comes to the rationality of one sort of belief in comparison to others.

So, what is this? Is this natural theology? If not, what is it? Let's call it provisionally an application of Reformed epistemology, concerning rationality of belief in the existence of a particular object. Is this to be subsumed under natural theology, or the other way around? Or maybe they can be conceived as mutually supporting projects.

In *The Nature Of Necessity*⁹⁷ Plantinga proposes an S5 modal form of the ontological argument for the existence of God, which is valid and if the first premise is accepted (which requires accepting just that "Possibly God exists"), is also sound. However, Plantinga claims that this still does not conclusively prove that God exists but, rather, that belief in God is rational, merely by virtue of the acceptance of possibility. An exercise in modal logic regarding the "Maximally Great Being"⁹⁸ certainly is an exercise in natural theology. But the modesty of the claim that the argument does not show that God exists but that it's rational to believe in God, is either a commitment to speak only in epistemological terms, not metaphysical, or a rhetorical device to understate an achievement in order to be more easily accepted.

Surely, proving only that it is rational to believe in God is not sufficient to prove that God exists? How is one supposed to make a choice between belief and unbelief?

⁹⁷ A. Plantinga: *The Nature of Necessity*, (Oxford: Clarendon Library of Logic and Philosophy, 1974)

⁹⁸ The term "Maximally Great Being" appears in Plantinga's *The Nature of Necessity* (1974) and it refers to a being that has maximal excellence —by maximal excellence the being is conceived to have all the attributes of classical theism (omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, goodness and being worthy of worship)— in all possible worlds or in all possible states of affairs.

Here the brilliance of Plantinga and his long-time project comes to the forefront: after showing that belief in God is rational (via argument from rational parity between belief in God and other minds, and the ontological argument)⁹⁹, and that objections to belief in God are unsound (*God, Freedom and Evil*),¹⁰⁰ he still does not attempt to prove that God exists. Instead he shows that the only competing meta-narratives on the market of modern ideas, Naturalism and Darwinian Evolution, contain inner epistemological inconsistencies that make them irrational to hold.¹⁰¹ The Evolutionary Argument against Naturalism,¹⁰² if accepted, pushes the unbeliever into the following corner: believing that in principle the belief in God is rational, believing that the objections to the belief in God are unsound, and finally believing that Naturalism is irrational to hold. That makes the choice between belief and unbelief in God much easier, doesn't it? The existence of God is not directly proven in an all-inclusive deductive argument, but in this round-about way, it remains the only rational belief option. Can this chain of argument be considered natural theology? I think it can. It certainly seems to leave the unbeliever without excuse, if the three sub-projects are correct. And at the same time, I think both Karl Barth and the Westminster Catechism can both say that Plantinga in the above strategy did nothing wrong.

⁹⁹ *Ibidem* and *God and Other Minds*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967)

¹⁰⁰ One of Plantinga's earlier works, from 1973, *God, Freedom and Evil*, addresses the atheological arguments, how he calls the objections to theistic belief. A. Plantinga, *God, Freedom and Evil*, (New York: William Eerdmans Publishing, 2002) pp. 7-65

¹⁰¹ I'm referring here to Alvin Plantinga's "Evolutionary Argument against Naturalism" presented in the last two chapters of *Warrant and Proper Function*: (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1993)

¹⁰² *Ibidem* 216 sq.

Moreover, in his essay *Christian Philosophy at the End of the Twentieth Century*, Plantinga is not opposed to natural theology.¹⁰³ He thinks that arguments for theism are useful to unbelievers to bring them closer to belief in God, and to believers who have their faith mixed with doubt. He stays faithful to the Reformed tradition in stating that saving faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit indwelling the heart of the believer, but also that *sensus divinitatis* is present in anyone, granting them the ability to be aware of God's existence. Hence he encourages the development of what he called "Positive Apologetics" and the arguments that come from it. These arguments need to be developed in loving detail, in spite of the fact that they are not apodictic. This clearly is not a project that would have the stamp of approval from Karl Barth.

Alvin Plantinga's life-long project of "natural theology" as described above, developed simultaneously with the creation and the tweaking of his epistemology, which he first called Reformed epistemology but later he named the Aquinas-Calvin model. This of course was in reaction to logical positivism and verificationism: first to evidentialism, second to classical foundationalism, and third to rationalism and post-modernism. Throughout, he is trying to achieve proper definitions, notions, and distinctions that measure rationality of belief, and the warrant necessary to turn mere true belief into knowledge. The notion of "proper function" and "design plan" are essential to his episte-

¹⁰³ In saying this I am indeed sidestepping some interactions in which Plantinga was more resistant to natural theology such as his interaction with Joseph Boyle. See. J. Boyle et al.: "The Reformed objection to Natural Theology. A Catholic Perspective" in *Christian Scholars Review* 11/3 (1982) pp. 199-211. But in this side-step I think I am justified by my belief that it is reasonable to believe that not even analytic philosophers are always consistent. Or maybe Plantinga is not inconsistent, he just thinks it can be useful, as an occasion, but not necessary since Christian Belief is after all properly basic.

mological model which is a form reliabilism. Their conceptualization make them dependent on a Designer. From this alone it is easy to notice that his epistemological model is dependent on his metaphysics. The ability of man to know is dependent on the structure put in place by the Creator. Plantinga is not at all ashamed to assume the Creator as a fundamental presupposition. His excuse is that everyone assumes something or other, why should the Christian Philosopher shy away from assuming what he believes? The primary metaphysical assumptions are not constructed from an epistemological process, but they are a consequence of grace and revelation. Then he completes the circle by going through epistemology and back to metaphysics. Certainly this is the method employed by classical natural theologians. Natural theology has an apologetic purpose.

However the Catholic project of natural theology has not remained static, either. Today,, it has taken new directions. For example Jay Richards, an Analytic Thomist, proposed “Intelligent Design,” in a more sophisticated form than William Paley’s design argument, as a dialogue with a more mechanistic understanding of finality, having the advantage of interacting more directly with science and scientism and not having to buy wholly into the Aristotelian metaphysical system even if not denying it.¹⁰⁴ “Intelligent Design” connected to natural theology has just two premises: “Some things are designed” and “Humans can identify design when certain criteria are met, at least as an inference to best explanation.” It is worth noticing that for the scientifically minded person this seems to be quite a troubling thought. If these premises are accepted, one can have positions of at least a Deist kind, something like Hume and Anthony Flew at the end of his

¹⁰⁴ Jay Wesley Richards: *Unapologetic Apologetics: Meeting the Challenges of Theological Studies*. (Downer’s Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2001.); see also *Privileged Planet*.

life. However, Aristotelian Thomists like Edward Feser have rejected this approach¹⁰⁵ because of prior metaphysical commitments regarding the final cause of all creation being the right interpretation of Aquinas's Fourth Way. They reject a mechanistic approach proper to science, and the objection that inferring design when it comes to small things can be in essence a God-of-the-gaps argument of the type: We don't know how this particular thing came about, therefore God must've done it. The back and forth between proponents of "Intelligent Design" and its detractors is ongoing, not only in Catholic milieu but in the larger Christian milieu as well. But what is true about both approaches is that metaphysical commitments come first and epistemological concerns second in the order of argumentation. Or to put it another way, they both espouse the foundationalist commitment to first principles. As I said before, while Vatican I recognized natural theology as an orthodox project, it never quite dogmatized which natural theology is the valid one; hence the ongoing debates.

Other directions taken by Catholic natural theology are those of John Henry Newman and Bernard Lonergan. John Henry Newman preferred to start from epistemology and to move to metaphysics, to move from the nature of doxastic assent and conscience to knowing reality and belief in God.¹⁰⁶ This does not contradict earlier approaches; it gives another starting point for drawing the circle, epistemology rather than metaphysics, although the circle is such that metaphysics will be developed out of a successful or at least plausible epistemology and hence the circle will be completed that

¹⁰⁵ Edward Feser, *Intelligent Design, theory and mechanism*, URL <<http://edwardfeser.blogspot.ca/2010/04/intelligent-design-theory-and-mechanism.html>> 10.04.2010.

¹⁰⁶ Newman, Cardinal John Henry. *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979).

way too. The move to start with epistemology seems to have been a constraint imposed by the skeptical nature of modernism, with which Catholic philosophy and theology must interact, and where metaphysical first principles become questionable and questioned.

Owing much of his approach to Newman and to Aquinas, but also his interactions with the early modern philosophers, Bernard Lonergan developed this approach even further. He originally called his epistemological model *the transcendental method*, but later dropped the term because of Kantian connotations and renamed it *the generalized empirical method*. He called it the transcendental method because its aim was self-transcendence, transcending subjectivity into objectivity by being committed to the authentic and unrestricted desires to know, to do what is good, to love, or the transcendental precepts: Be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be good and finally be in-love. This inner drive of the soul, of consciousness and conscience, if followed with commitment authentically bridges the gap between the self and the “reality out there” that was imposed by Cartesian thought.

In ch. 19 of his work *Insight*, called “General Transcendent Knowledge,” Bernard Lonergan presented his natural theology. He did this is after carefully constructing a system of notions that are isomorphic expressions of the operations involved in knowing, namely experience, understanding, judging and deciding, developed previously. The developed notions, while metaphysical, emerge from his epistemology as start point, as in the case of cardinal Newman.

Firstly, Lonergan rejects the notion that knowing consists of or is similar to looking or mere experience. Inquiry, insight and formulation which are sub-operations of the level of understanding, do not merely reproduce the content of sensible experience but

they go beyond. They sublimate it and they transcend it. Moreover, the further operations of reflection, grasping the unconditioned, assenting and affirming are not just reproductions of the level of understanding but they go beyond it; they sublimate and transcend it. In this way naive empiricism and naive rationalism are rejected.

Lonergan goes on to say that “The immanent source of transcendence in man is his detached, disinterested, unrestricted desire to know”. The desire to know is the desire to understand correctly and to affirm truth. While the desire is unrestricted, its attainment is not. The proof of the unrestricted desire is the unlimited number of questions one may ask, and the drive to avoid any obscurantism. Affirmation of truth is affirmation of being. He further says:

“Apart from being there is nothing. The proposition is analytic, for it cannot be denied without internal contradiction. If apart from being there was something, that something would be; and if that something were, it would be another instance of being and so not apart from being. Moreover, being is the objective of the detached and disinterested desire to know; for that desire grounds inquiry and reflection; inquiry leads to understanding, reflection leads to affirmation; and being is whatever can be affirmed intelligently and grasped reasonably. But being is unrestricted for apart from it there is nothing. Therefore the objective of the detached and disinterested desire is unrestricted. But a desire with an unrestricted objective is an unrestricted desire.”¹⁰⁷

What is to be noticed in the above quote is that metaphysical notions are defined

¹⁰⁷ Bernard Lonergan: *Insight*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2005), p. 662

epistemically. Being is the objective of the authentic desire to know. Being is that which we affirm on reflection. This shows that every metaphysical principle is constructed with reference to the epistemic operations and there is no distance between authentic act of self-transcending and knowing what is because the notion of being itself is transcendent. The dualist distance is erased in this higher viewpoint.

Because the idea of being is itself transcendent, it means that there is an act of understanding that is unrestricted, and this act which goes beyond all human achievement assigns the limit of all processes of going beyond. The idea or the notion of being as content of the act of understanding allows us to formulate a few properties of it: it is completely universal, completely concrete, intrinsically intelligible, identical to the good, identical with the real.

The idea of being has two components: the primary component consists in the unrestricted act's understanding of itself, and the secondary component consists in the unrestricted act's understanding of everything else because it understands itself.

However, we don't know until we judge. Our judgments rest on the grasp of the virtually unconditioned; and the virtually unconditioned is a condition that happens to have its conditions fulfilled. Thus we grasp proportionate being, being proportionate to our knowledge. But the fulfilment of the conditions is an epistemic form of speaking of causality which is the metaphysical notion.

So in the end what are the formulations that can arise from this epistemically grounded metaphysics?

The most general form, almost as baffling and unconvincing as the ontological argument, is:

P1. If the real is completely intelligible, God exists.

P2. But the real is completely intelligible.

C: Therefore God exists.

The first premise of the argument needs argument in its favour, because It's not readily plausible especially, if one did not grasp fully the implications of Lonergan's epistemically grounded metaphysics. Argument in favour of P1:

p1. If the real is completely intelligible, then complete intelligibility exists.

p2. If complete intelligibility exists, the idea of being exists.

p3. If the idea of being exists, then God exists.

P1: Therefore, if the real is completely intelligible, God exists.

In this line of argument it's the third premise that seems to ask for more justification, while the other two seem to be rather tautological. The justification is the following argument:

a1. For if the idea of being exists, at least it's primary component exists.

b2. But the primary component has been shown to possess all the attributes of God (being absolutely unconditioned, unrestricted, universal etc.).

p3: Therefore, if the idea of being exists, God exists.

It becomes obvious that Lonergan's project of natural theology is not just a pure possible movement from the created to the Creator, which allows for further doubt, but in fact underlying his method, there is a rejection of scepticism, logical positivism and Kantianism. Lonergan goes on to say about appealing to doubt just because one can possibly say about any concluding proposition, "maybe that isn't so":

"Kant spoke of transcendental illusion, and if what he meant has been shown

to be a mistake, the expression survives to generate distrust. But it is not the detached and disinterested desire to understand correctly that can be named an illusion, for it is interference with that desire that is at the root of all error. Nor can the unrestricted desire to know be named a transcendental illusion, for there has to exist some illusion before it can be either immaterial or transcendental. Nor can one say that the pure desire exists, that is not illusory, yet in fact is not unrestricted. After all, Kantians and positivists are not deluded but merely mistaken when they endeavour to restrict human inquiry within bounds that everyone naturally and spontaneously transcends.”¹⁰⁸

It is worth mentioning that the Reformed philosopher, Hermann Dooyeweerd in his four volume work: *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, developed a similar epistemology with similar consequences for natural theology as those proposed by Bernard Lonergan. For example, in presenting Dooyeweerd’s epistemology, J.M. Spier remarks: “Subjectivism seeks certainty in the logical subject, and realism in the logical object. Both seek it within creation and not in God. The Christian position is that the true knowledge of reality is only possible in the light of true knowledge of God.”¹⁰⁹

Dooyeweerd’s position comes with the background of assuming the authenticity of revelation and faith, so it stays true to the presuppositionalist Reformed tradition of not being ashamed of what one believes or assumes as a Christian philosopher, even before one engages the journey of inquiry, an attitude that we also observed in Alvin Plantinga. But what is interesting is that in negative terms, he identifies the same errors

¹⁰⁸ *Ibidem*

¹⁰⁹ J. M. Spier: *An introduction to Christian Philosophy*, (Nutley: Craig Press 1966), p. 161

that Lonergan did in naturalistic and in sceptical philosophical currents. The dualism between knower and the known, the distance between the subject and the object, all because there is no higher viewpoint. The light of the true knowledge of God in the case of Dooyeweerd and the affirmation of the absolutely unconditioned being is this higher viewpoint which destroys the distance between subject and object, whether by design and faith or by participation in the intelligibility of being.

We saw that both in the Catholic tradition and in Reformed tradition we find opponents to either natural theology as a whole (see Ockham and Barth) or to certain kinds of natural theology (see Feser and Plantinga). But opposing certain kinds of natural theology is not a statement about the orthodoxy of the project or its possibility; just a criticism of particular arguments or lines of thought. The second canon of Vatican I Council excised the opponents of natural theology from the Catholic Church, but in the Reformed tradition the two positions have been kept in parallel, which has meant a chance for a particular kind of development to both positions. This particular kind of development is the modern Reformed epistemology of Alvin Plantinga and the philosophy of Dooyeweerd. This allowed a sort of doing natural theology without having pretentious claims of certainty about it. The example that was previously presented of Alvin Plantinga, triple layered project - Showing that in principle classical arguments for and against God are inconclusive, showing that belief in God is at least rational, and showing that naturalism (the only competing meta-narrative is not, cornering the non-believer to make a commitment to what at least is rational, is in some sense a project of natural theology and in another sense is just Reformed epistemology applied analytically. So, in very particular way, at least with regards to this triple layered project, Plantinga can be

claimed by both parties, those who oppose and those who affirm the natural theology project. However, Plantinga himself makes clear that he supports Christian philosophers in engaging in arguments of natural theology, especially in the analytic tradition and also that there is no contradiction between his epistemology and that of Thomas Aquinas: “As a matter of fact, I think Calvin and Thomas Aquinas, are very close on matters epistemological, in particular on matters concerning the epistemology of Christian belief. In *Warranted Christian Belief* I propose a model under which specifically Christian belief can have warrant and to note that concord I call it the Aquinas-Calvin model.”¹¹⁰ So, in so far as Plantinga is concerned, doors are wide open for cross-overs from the Catholic project of natural philosophy to the analytic project of Reformed epistemology, and their compatibility is assumed.

From the other side of the alley, we saw that the project of natural theology took constant forms in the Catholic Church under Thomistic influence, being almost identified with Thomism under its diverse variants. We saw mentioned contemporaneous tendencies of some Catholic theologians to address the threat of scientism by trying to make a synthesis between Thomistic thought and “Intelligent Design,” and how this project received opposition from more traditional Aristotelian Thomists. But we also saw how, the ‘transcendental’ Thomism of Bernard Lonergan, manages to address the same concerns without needing such a synthesis. In a similar way to Plantinga, Lonergan’s first questions are epistemological. But while Plantinga’s question is “Why think it irrational

¹¹⁰ A. Plantinga “Afterword”, in James Sennet (ed.) *The Analytic Theist*, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998) 354, footnote 4.

of me to believe in God?" which is an epistemological question with a definite apologetic aim, and which determines the creation of an epistemology coherent with metaphysical presuppositions contained in the question, Lonergan's epistemological questions are universal: What am I doing when I'm knowing? why is that knowing? What am I knowing when I know? etc. And from this question a metaphysics is created capable of producing an argument for the existence of God. The argument for the existence of God needs to be analytically sufficient, because the act of understanding requires it.

The conclusion is rather simple: bridging the Catholic project of natural theology to the Reformed epistemology is not a problem because it involves no contradiction. There are distinctions regarding beginning points in inquiry, method of argumentation, but as long as the circle is complete, the beginning point is not of the essence. Rather the beginning point is more a question of rhetoric, a question of what is suitable more in one situation than another, in one age than another and so forth. In fact the two approaches can be complementary in as far as one can act as verification for the other.

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