

## **Rahner and Lonergan on the commitment to St. Thomas Aquinas**

by MMag. Linus Kpalap, University of Innsbruck

It has been said that this year marks the 750<sup>th</sup> Anniversary since St. Thomas Aquinas began teaching at the University of Paris. So it is befitting to have a Conference here in Hungary dedicated to “a reassessment of the meaning of Aquinas” and “his influence”, an influence which, for some, is not restricted to a commitment to the school known as “Thomism”.

Now in 1974 a colloquy on medieval religious thought, which took place at the University of Chicago Divinity School, was organised jointly by the University of Chicago, the Catholic Theological Union, and the Jesuit School of Theology at Chicago to mark the septicentenary celebration of Saints Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas.<sup>1</sup> This colloquy had as its leitmotif the theme of “Tradition and Innovation”. For it is seen that Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas were for the people of their time great innovators of the Christian Tradition. The opening lectures of this colloquy were delivered by Richard McKeon, Bernard Lonergan, and Karl Rahner. Rahner and Lonergan, two outstanding philosopher-theologians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, spoke on Aquinas.

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

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

### I

If the *Aeterni Patris* of Leo XIII in 1879 set into motion the boom in Thomistic studies, it remains that that trend waned particularly after the Second Vatican Council. The flow of literary turn-out on Thomistic studies later experienced an ebb marked by disinterest in Thomism in particular and Scholasticism as a whole. As

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<sup>1</sup> Celebrating the Medieval Heritage: A Colloquy on the Thought of Aquinas and Bonaventure.

Lonergan remarked, “what had been a torrent has become a trickle”.<sup>2</sup> But in the period of drought of interest in St. Thomas, Rahner and Lonergan continued to stress their indebtedness to him and insisted on the relevance of the Angelic Doctor for the post-conciliar developments in philosophy and theology. They continued to refer to him, to speak about him, and also warned against any attempt to jettison him from the framework of Catholic thought or neglect him. Their personal commitment to St. Thomas remained steadfast both in the flow and ebb of Thomistic literary production.

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

In his later writings, especially those of the post-conciliar period, Rahner drew the attention of contemporary Catholic theologians to the importance of St. Thomas. He regretted the “strange silence on the subject of Thomas”<sup>4</sup> shown by the recession of St. Thomas into the background among theologians. Rahner wanted this trend to be put to a halt, not through a sort of naïve commitment to St. Thomas as would occur in trying to restore the former seminary Thomism or in making his works the textbook of theology for today, but rather by making Thomas “alive in contemporary theology even though his function in it is more or less that of a Father of the Church”.<sup>5</sup> Rahner hoped that St. Thomas’s teaching could be kept alive in contemporary theology if independent thinkers, as they constantly emerge afresh in theology, could summon the courage that would be needed to swim against the currents of the cult of mere modernism and so enter the arduous school of a great master like St. Thomas. It is only in the presence of such independent and courageous thinkers and theologians that it would be possible to keep St. Thomas alive in contemporary philosophical and theological thinking.<sup>6</sup>

In this period of disinterest in Thomistic studies, Rahner would lecture and publish on themes concerning St. Thomas. His essay on “The Concept of Truth according to Aquinas,” which came from the same period as his *Spirit in the World* and *Hearer of the World*, would appear in publication, in a then new volume of the

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<sup>2</sup> B. Lonergan, *A Third Collection*, ed. F.E. Crowe, (New York: Paulist Press, 1985) 35.

<sup>3</sup> G. A. McCool, “The Philosophy of the Human Person in Karl Rahner”, *Theological Studies* 22 (1961) 537-562.

<sup>4</sup> K. Rahner, *Theological Investigation* Vol. XIII, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 1975) 3f.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

*Theological Investigations*. Rahner would write on the “Hiddenness of God” and “The Incomprehensibility of God according to St. Thomas.” These two themes have their roots in his *Spirit in the World* and *Hearer of the Word*. His writing on “The Incomprehensibility of God in St. Thomas” has appeared in at least three different forms, attesting to the fact that he spoke on this theme in the 1970s at least on three different occasions which demanded increasing penetration into the matter. Rahner took up again, in his *Foundations of Christian Faith*, the epistemological grounding that was already present in his *Hearer of the Word* which is grounded in the Thomistic metaphysics of knowledge. Prof. Coreth<sup>7</sup> has added Rahner’s *Foundations of Christian Faith* to *Spirit in the World* and *Hearer of the Word* as the main works in which one can find the philosophical foundations of Karl Rahner’s theology. Coreth would say further that most of the criticisms of Rahner’s theology owe their origins to a lack of understanding of its philosophical foundations. These works, which form the philosophical foundations of Rahner’s theology, have their roots in Rahner’s interpretation of St. Thomas. And to conclude, it is worth saying that Rahner kept mentioning explicitly the name of Aquinas in all the sixteen volumes of his *Schriften zur Theologie*,<sup>8</sup> thereby making the voice of Aquinas resound both in his early and later writings.

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

<sup>7</sup> E. Coreth, *Beiträge zur Christlichen Philosophie*, ed. C. Kanzian (Innsbruck: Tyrolia, 1999) 373.

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

<sup>9</sup> B. Lonergan, *A Second Collection*, ed. W.F.J. Ryan and B.J. Tyrell (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 38.

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

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

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

## II

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

In drawing attention to the ongoing relevance of St. Thomas's thought, Rahner noted that the Second Vatican Council, in spite of its less forceful tone, still refers to the role of St. Thomas in philosophical and theological formation. This Council has singled out St. Thomas among other Church Fathers in its pronouncements about ecclesiastical studies.<sup>16</sup>

We live in a post-Kantian world where the anthropological turn still influences the cultural and intellectual life of people. Rahner recommends for anyone interested in reaching back to the roots of the anthropological turn in thinking that they should

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<sup>11</sup> B. Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, CWL Vol.2 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997) 3-11.

<sup>12</sup> *A Second Collection*, 11-32.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 277.

<sup>14</sup> *A Third Collection*, 35-54.

<sup>15</sup> *Caring About Meaning*, 103.

<sup>16</sup> *Theological Investigations* Vol. XIII, 3f.

not bypass St. Thomas who should be seen as an initiator of the anthropocentric approach.<sup>17</sup> He is of the view which says that one can stumble upon certain qualities that belong to transcendental theology in St. Thomas's writings, qualities which show that transcendental theology is not an absolutely new discovery with respect to an area of investigation that had never existed before.<sup>18</sup>

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

He stressed the need of theologians and philosophers of today to learn from St. Thomas. For they can learn from him what it means "to think in breadth, to have enough boldness to be modest and self-critical, to give devoted consideration to points which seem uninteresting or not relevant to the moment, to listen to, and take seriously, the views of others, even when they may at first be on a different wavelength from oneself in the arguments they put forward, to recognize genuinely and sincerely that one can only exercise self-criticism, and so be truly modern and avoid merely following the fashions of yesterday with the rest, by bearing in mind the ideas of earlier ages."<sup>20</sup> Contemporary philosophers and theologians can also learn from St. Thomas to recognize the limits of philosophical and theological insights and to have a sense of reverence and yearning for the eternal light. They need to learn from him not only how to strive for a precise linguistic formulation of their insights, but also how to adore the mystery that transcends all powers of expression. They need to learn from St. Thomas what it means to be forced out of the brightness of a dimension which they can comprehend, and into the mystery of God where they no longer grasp but rather are grasped, where they no longer rationalize but rather adore, where they no longer control but rather are themselves subject to a higher control.<sup>21</sup>

For Lonergan also, there is an ongoing relevance of St. Thomas for philosophers and theologians of today. Given the presence today of ongoing differentiations within human consciousness and specializations of field within human inquiry, contemporary philosophers and theologians are being confronted with fundamentally the same type of problematics which, St. Thomas had to face in his day. An apologetic clarification of issues is needed today as Aquinas, in his own time, had attempted. As in the days of Aquinas, systematic thinking in theology and

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 4f.

<sup>18</sup> K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations* Vol. XI, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974) 86.

<sup>19</sup> *Theological Investigations* Vol. XIII, 10f.

<sup>20</sup> *Theological Investigations* Vol. XIII, 7-8.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

philosophy needs a broad and coherent basis. Our account of the human person's salvation today presupposes an adequate understanding of the human person just as this had been the case in the times of Aquinas.<sup>22</sup>

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

Again, in an age where the turn to the subject has been dominating human thinking, and intentionality analysis is playing a key role in phenomenological thinking, there is a need to turn to Aquinas who had a firm grasp about what introspective analysis consists in and who, together with Aristotle and St. Augustine, practised an introspective analysis whose focus lies in objectifying our acts of conscious intentionality. Lonergan says that Aquinas said enough about the subject so that he could go on to write his *Verbum* articles.<sup>24</sup>

The problem of philosophical method plays a key role in philosophical thinking since the rise of modern philosophy. In this concern for philosophical method, there has emerged from Kant to Gadamer a number of formulations about what has been characterized as the "transcendental method" which, in this context, is seen as the proper method for doing philosophy. According to Lonergan, St. Thomas understood the point about what this method is all about although he did not elaborate a transcendental method. As evidence of this, one can refer to "St. Thomas's argument against Averroes: Averroes's position implied the conclusion that *this man does not understand* and St. Thomas concluded that therefore *this man was not to be listened to*".<sup>25</sup>

In addition, modern science rejects the scientific ideal of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* just as Aquinas had done. Lonergan says that Aquinas did not allow himself to be caught in the implications of the scientific ideal as this was presented in

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<sup>22</sup> *A Third Collection*, 51.

<sup>23</sup> *A Third Collection*, 51f.

<sup>24</sup> *A Second Collection*, 53.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*. Aquinas did this by placing a restriction on applying the scientific ideal of essential predication since he continually insisted that, in this life, we neither know the essence of God nor the essence of the substance of a material object.<sup>26</sup>

In addition, Aquinas's achievement in differentiating the orders of nature and grace, philosophy and theology, still lives on and deserves to be pushed further. His distinction between the natural and the supernatural orders paved the way for an independent study of nature in which, first, philosophy is studied for its own sake without simply serving as a tool for theology, and second, natural science seeks its own autonomy, not only from Aristotle, but also from philosophy, and third, scholarship makes it possible to make the history of religions an independent study that is apart from theology.<sup>27</sup>

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

### III

The ongoing relevance of the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas sets before us a two-fold task: appropriating the framework of Aquinas and then transposing his framework in the context of our contemporary problematic. Rahner and Lonergan both give helpful indications on how one could go about this task of appropriating the framework of St. Thomas's thought.

Appropriating the thought of St. Thomas means for Rahner trying to get at the philosophical events in St. Thomas which remained in the background of his theological works. To grasp what is really philosophical in St. Thomas means to join St. Thomas in looking at the matter itself so as to understand what he means. It involves reliving the philosophy itself as it unfolds by taking a definite starting point and abandoning oneself to the dynamism of the matter itself. One then evaluates the accuracy of one's understanding by constantly checking the progress of development in understanding him against his explicit statements. In doing all these things, one is involved in reconstructing the living philosophy from which St. Thomas

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<sup>26</sup> *A Third Collection*, 49,187.

<sup>27</sup> *A Third Collection*, 36.

<sup>28</sup> *A Second Collection*, 137.

wrote his theology but which he never articulated in its unity and development and which remained rather hidden in the silence of his thought.<sup>29</sup>

To appropriate St. Thomas for Rahner means posing questions to St. Thomas which must drive the finished propositions in St. Thomas' writings back to their objective problematic.<sup>30</sup>

Rahner's appropriation of St. Thomas' thought means more than just assembling and summarizing the relevant statements he made. It involves creatively reconstructing his original line of reasoning. Such an interpretation of St. Thomas distinguishes itself from the common opinions found in scholasticism and it wants its claim of validity to be settled not by invoking the consensus of scholastics, but rather only by freshly examining St. Thomas' own writings and the matter itself which is being discussed.<sup>31</sup>

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

Lonergan speaks about his appropriation of St. Thomas in terms of the years he spent "reaching up to the mind of Aquinas." This reaching up to the mind of Aquinas could be understood along the lines of the Leonine programme of *vetera novis augere et perficere*, of augmenting and perfecting the old by means of the new. His studies of Aquinas in his *Gratia operans* and *Verbum* led him to penetrate the mind of Aquinas in order to ascertain the *vetera*. The labour of penetrating the mind of Aquinas forced him to follow Aquinas, through his successive works, to detect any variations and developments in his views. Hence, he could see for himself how the intellect of Aquinas developed more rapidly on some points and more slowly on others until it reached a dynamic equilibrium that continued to drive towards an ever fuller, more nuanced synthesis of things.<sup>33</sup>

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

<sup>29</sup> K. Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, W. Dych trans. (New York: Continuum) 1994, xlix-l.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, li-lii.

<sup>31</sup> *Theological Investigations* Vol. XIII, 14-15.

<sup>32</sup> *Spirit in the World*, liiif.

<sup>33</sup> B. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*. (London: Longmans, Green and Co 1957) 747f.

distinction between concept and judgment. “In the *Sentences*, Thomas hasn’t the distinction between concept and understanding. That occurs for the first time in the *De veritate*. In the fourth book of the *Sentences*, there may be something like that, but in the clear instance, he is describing an architect, a man planning a city: he has his key idea, his inspiration, and then the unfolding of it -- planning various ornaments, buildings and streets, market places and so on -- a big layout. Conceiving it is the planning part, but you have to be intelligent to understand how these things will fit together, what would be aesthetic, and all the rest. That is the understanding, and he calls it *prima forma*. The other, the product of it, is *secunda forma*, and that Thomas calls the *conceptio* or *conceptus*”.<sup>34</sup> This development can be seen in St. Thomas’s division of inner words. On this division, Lonergan notes that the “four major works of Aquinas and a large number of his commentators are silent”.<sup>35</sup> The works he cited are “the *Sentences*, the *Contra Gentiles*, -- which ...mentions definition but not judgment”...the *Summa*... and the *Compendium Theologiae*”. As an exception from the other commentators, he says that “Ferrariensis acknowledges the twofold inner word”.<sup>36</sup> He goes on to say that “four other works of recognized standing divide inner words into the two classes of definitions and judgments, and three of these recall the parallel of the Aristotelian twofold operation of the mind”.<sup>37</sup> In addition “the *De veritate* argues that there is a *processio operati* in the intellect”, which “clearly supposes that the judgment is an inner word, for only in the judgment is there truth or falsity”, and he goes on to stress that “while Aquinas does refer frequently to the inner word as a *conceptio*, *conceptum*, *conceptus*, ... Aquinas employed it to denote judgments” and that inner words correspond mainly to reality, which is divided “into essence and existence”.<sup>38</sup>

The task of appropriating St. Thomas demands that one learns to practise the introspective analysis of one’s own cognitional and volitional acts. Lonergan was convinced that it is only through a personal practice of introspective analysis with respect to our cognitional acts that we can understand that *intelligere* means understanding for Aquinas. The contention of Lonergan’s *Verbum* study is that in order to follow Aquinas in catching the point that, for him, *intelligere* means understanding, “one must practice introspective rational psychology; without that, one no more can know the created image of the Blessed Trinity, as Aquinas

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<sup>34</sup> *Caring About Meaning*, 101.

<sup>35</sup> *Verbum*, 17.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 17, Note 19.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

conceived it, than a blind man can know colors".<sup>39</sup> In other words "it is only through a personal appropriation of one's own rational self-consciousness that one can hope to reach the mind of Aquinas".<sup>40</sup>

#### IV

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

Rahner says explicitly that the intention behind his doing a historical study on St. Thomas, in his *Spirit in the World*, was conditioned by the need to transpose St. Thomas into the framework of the contemporary problematic in philosophy and theology. He says that his aim of getting away from so much of what was called "neo-scholasticism" in order to return to St. Thomas himself is explained by a desire to "move closer to those questions which are being posed to contemporary philosophy."<sup>41</sup> For this reason, a "confrontation of modern philosophy from Kant to Heidegger with Thomas"<sup>42</sup> remained at the background of his work. For Rahner, the problem of modern philosophy refers to the need for a critical foundation for metaphysics and the question of man and man's knowledge God as an integral part of general metaphysics.

This intention of transposing the framework of Aquinas is indicated in Rahner's paper on "Thomas Aquinas on the Incomprehensibility of God." In this paper Rahner undertook a two-fold task. In the first part, he set out to "speak about this teaching in Thomas himself" in a historical study that attempts to say something about Aquinas's teaching as it is given in his writings. Then, in a second part, leaving Thomas behind as it were," Rahner tried "to translate this teaching into the self-understanding of a contemporary man..., to speak about the incomprehensibility of man and of God in a way that seems appropriate for a contemporary man,"<sup>43</sup> thereby showing "that the ultimate that we can still say about man even today is just what Thomas had already known with admirable clarity and sobriety."<sup>44</sup> Paul Ricoeur describes this procedure of Rahner's as satisfying "the most fundamental rule of any hermeneutics, that is, that the interpreter transfers and translates the meaning of a

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>40</sup> *Insight*, 748.

<sup>41</sup> *Spirit in the World*, xvii.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, lii.

<sup>43</sup> K. Rahner, "Aquinas on the Incomprehensibility of God", *Journal of Religion Supplement* (1978) S107.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, S107.

work of the past into the language of his own time, and by doing so, one acknowledges and preserves the distance between this past and one's present."<sup>45</sup>

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

Lonergan considers that what he did in his book *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* was achieve a transposition of the framework of Aquinas which he had been appropriating through years of labouring spent reaching up of the mind of Aquinas. His *Insight* is "an independently elaborated system of thought" in which he imports Aquinas's "compelling genius to the problems of this later day".<sup>47</sup> What he has done is achieve a transposition of Aquinas' framework which answers problems posed by both seven centuries of modern science and the critical problem raised by modern philosophy since Descartes and Kant. His transposition of Aquinas's framework is able to provide a synthesis of modern science and modern philosophy; it develops a critical metaphysics and a philosophy of God that are verified in one's psychological experience of the cognitive fact of knowing, objectivity, and reality in response to three basic questions: What do I do when I am knowing? Why is doing that knowing? What is known when I am knowing?

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

## V

<sup>45</sup> P. Ricoeur, "Response to Karl Rahner's lecture: On the Incomprehensibility of God", *Journal of Religion Supplement* (1978), S126.

<sup>46</sup> *Spirit in the World*, xvi.

<sup>47</sup> *Insight*, 748.

<sup>48</sup> *A Second Collection*, 45f.

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

What William Wallace means by "developmental Thomism" refers to the kind of Thomism which developed after the death of St. Thomas. He distinguishes, on the one hand, this form of Thomism from "historical Thomism, the Thomism of the thirteenth century". Developmental Thomism arose from dialogues that Thomists, or those trained in the Thomistic tradition, engaged in when they encountered other philosophical currents. The fruitfulness of this dialogue which led to developments in philosophical and theological thinking is what helps keep Thomism alive. But, such a development only retains its validity if the "developers" are all kept honest, if they preserve the purity of St. Thomas's teaching and do not corrupt it by introducing foreign influences. He argues that the phases of renewal in Thomism arose as reactions to the failure of early developers who had failed to preserve the purity of St. Thomas's teaching in their efforts to effect desired, needed developments. However, one can go further and ask if Wallace's criteria for an authentic development of Thomism truly preserves the purity of St. Thomas's teaching. It is it "purely Thomistic"?

With respect to this question, both Rahner and Lonergan argue for a developmental Thomism which claims to be authentically Thomist, without admitting or accepting a mistaken view which says that a developmental Thomism can only be authentically Thomistic if it takes "on the appearance of a mummy that would preserve for all time Greek science and medieval common sense."<sup>50</sup> For Rahner, a developmental Thomism can claim to be authentically Thomistic if it begins with a starting point given by Thomas, and authentically developmental if "such starting points given by Thomas will be pushed further by one's own thought" in such a way "that the historically accessible fragments of his philosophy can really become philosophy".<sup>51</sup> Rahner understood his developmental Thomism to be of the kind "which shares the objective concerns of contemporary philosophy and which joins Thomas in looking first at the matter itself, and only then at the formulation which is found in Thomas".<sup>52</sup> And so, one can say that Lonergan's developmental Thomism is authentically Thomistic since it has been able to piece "together from Thomist

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<sup>49</sup> William A. Wallace, "The Case for Developmental Thomism" *Proceedings of The American Catholic Philosophical Association* XLIV (1970) 1-16.

<sup>50</sup> *Insight*, 401.

<sup>51</sup> *Spirit in the World*, I.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, lii.

writings a sufficient number of indications and suggestions to form an adequate account of wisdom in cognitional terms”, which Aquinas seems not to have “treated explicitly”.<sup>53</sup> Just as Aquinas’s *emanatio intelligibilis* gives an account of the rational process “that made explicit what Augustine could only suggest”, so is Lonergan’s analysis of our levels of conscious intentionality an authentic development of Aquinas who “did practice psychological introspection and through that experimental knowledge of his own soul arrived at his highly nuanced, deeply penetrating, firmly outlined theory of the nature of the human intellect”,<sup>54</sup> although he did not elevate the introspective analysis “into a reflectively elaborated technique”.<sup>55</sup>

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

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<sup>53</sup> *Insight*, 407.

<sup>54</sup> *Verbum*, 104.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.