

Lonergan on the Natural Desire in the Light of Feingold

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THIS ESSAY will measure Bernard Lonergan's understanding of the natural desire to see God asserted by St. Thomas against that provided by Lawrence Feingold.¹ Feingold does not refer to Lonergan. Fr. Lonergan's treatment of the natural desire has been important for many North American theologians, however.² Moreover, it has recently received renewed and detailed attention from Michael Stebbins.³

Feingold finds the structure of the issues surrounding the natural desire to see God in three questions, where the answer to the first governs the answer to the second, and the answer to the second that of the third. First, is the desire to see God innate or elicited? Second, is it a conditional or an unconditional desire? Third, is it probative of the possibility of seeing God, and even of the actual offer by God of that end, or not?

¹ Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters* (Rome: Apollinare Studi, 2001).

² See principally (1) Bernard Lonergan, SJ, *De Ente Supernaturali. Supplementum schematicum*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (Toronto: Regis College, 1973), thesis IV, scholion I, "De naturali desiderio videndi Deum per essentiam," 35–42, which first appeared in 1946 and without knowledge of the *Summa*; (2) in the appendix to the *De ente*, note to section 83, 84–85, added 1951–52; (3) idem, "The Natural Desire to See God," in *Collection*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (New York: Herder, 1967), 84–95, first published in 1949; and (4) two short book reviews, the first, idem, review of *The Eternal Quest* by William R. O'Connor, *Theological Studies* 9 (1948): 125–27; and the second, idem, review of *Man's Last End* by Joseph Buckley, *Theological Studies* 10 (1949): 578–80.

³ J. Michael Stebbins, *The Divine Initiative: Grace, World-Order, and Human Freedom in the Early Writings of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 142–82.

Answers are related as follows. If the desire is innate, an inclination of the will or the nature itself, a preconscious inclining and tending to quidditative knowledge of God that is prior to knowledge, then the desire is also unconditional and absolute.⁴ Further, if the desire is unconditional, an absolute inclination of the nature itself, then the vision of God will certainly be possible and more, it will be the actual destiny to which humanity is ordered, for it will be *debitum naturae*.⁵

On the other hand, if the desire is not innate but elicited, a conscious desire of the will that follows upon the knowledge that God exists, then although naturally following from the innate desire of intellect to know the causes and principles of reality, it will, apart from faith, be an imperfect desire, as for an object beyond the proportion of the human way of knowing, and so a conditional desire, as for something impossible to attain by our own active powers. Further, if the desire is elicited and conditional, it can at most indicate the fittingness that man see God, but not demonstrate its possibility and much less its actuality as the destiny God ordains for us.

Let us turn to Lonergan, and begin with the third question, the probative value of the desire to see God. A very quick reading of his texts would tell us that the natural desire to see God is not probative of the possibility of vision, much less of its actual offer.⁶ As for the second question, we would gather that the fulfillment of the desire is conditioned on freely given supernatural helps of grace and the supernatural virtues, not to speak of the light of glory.⁷ Further, the potency for fulfillment of the desire is obediential, and so by definition is conditioned on the divine will to elevate man to the supernatural order.⁸ Should we expect to read in Lonergan and in conformity with Feingold's analysis that therefore the desire to see God is an elicited and imperfect desire, however, we will be disappointed. Rather, according to Lonergan, the desire is very explicitly not an elicited desire but an innate desire, an innate tendency, and one moreover not of the will, but of the intellect.⁹ It is the desire or inclination or

⁴ Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 23.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁶ Lonergan, *De Ente*, 40, no. 78.

⁷ Lonergan, "Natural Desire," 86.

⁸ Lonergan, *De Ente*, 36, nos. 69–70; 38–38, no. 75.

⁹ Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, 151–52: For Lonergan, the "natural" of the "natural desire," in addition to being set off from the supernatural, "conveys the notion of something that 'is opposed not to the supernatural but to the elicited: that is, it is not an act elicited in an appetitive potency but is the very order of the potency to act, the natural tendency of the potency itself.'" Stebbins here translates *De Ente*, 35, no. 67. According to Feingold, by contrast, the "natural" of the "natural desire" is to be set off not from the elicited (and not only from the supernatural), but from

tendency of the intellect just as such.¹⁰ “There exists a natural desire to understand. . . . This natural desire extends to understanding God.”¹¹

So for the second and third questions, we must have read Lonergan too rapidly. Let us go more slowly. For the third question, no, the natural desire for the vision of God is not probative of the possibility of vision, but more, the desire cannot even be known unless we know the actual ordination of man to vision by faith.¹² The conclusion that there is a natural desire of the intellect to see God, Lonergan says, “is theological,” and “can be thought only because one has the faith, knows the fact of the beatific vision, and so must accept its possibility.”¹³ According to Feingold’s Thomas, to the contrary, the desire is known because elicited, and so available to our consciousness of our own acts, as soon as we know the existence of the First Cause.¹⁴

To be sure, Lonergan reports *Summa theologiae* I, question 12, article 8, according to which St. Thomas teaches us that, knowing the existence of God, we want naturally to know what he is. But this conscious and elicited desire to know the essence of God is for Lonergan but a “corollary” of what the “natural desire” really refers to, namely, the inclination of intellect itself.¹⁵

the *deliberated*; it is a desire elicited necessarily, immediately, and without discursive reasoning upon the knowledge that God exists, as opposed to an elicited desire that does follow upon a process of reasoning; see Feingold, *Natural Desire*, chs. 2 and 3, esp. 63, and 319–21 (Sylvester of Ferrara).

¹⁰ Lonergan, *De Ente*, 36, nos. 68–69; 37, no. 71: the natural desire of the intellect is the “tendētia intellectus in quaerendum et sciendum,” but “antecedit haec tendētia omnem explicitam quaestionem”; *ibid.*, 37, no. 72: “exsistit tendētia intellectus humani in quidditatem Dei cognoscendam, in ipsum Deum intelligendum.”

¹¹ Lonergan, “Natural Desire,” 87. It was Durandus of St. Pourçain who first characterized the desire to see God as an innate tendency of the intellect; see Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 147, 321, and see 634–35, note 8, for moderns who embrace this position. Remember, for Scotus the natural desire to see God is an innate desire of the will, not the intellect. See Lonergan’s review of O’Connor, 125, praising him for making the desire a desire of intellect, not of will.

¹² Lonergan, *De Ente*, 42, no. 83: “Naturale desiderium visionis cognoscitur postquam theologus factum visionis cognovit et in quantum eius convenientiam explicare conatur.” In speaking of the desire, St. Thomas speaks as a theologian, Lonergan says, *De Ente*, 40–41, nos. 79–80, and this holds for the argument from reason in *ST* I, q. 12, a. 1, c.

¹³ Lonergan, “Natural Desire,” 87.

¹⁴ See Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 109, and 143, where he points out that the appeal to the natural desire loses its apologetic value if, as an innate desire, it cannot be known independently of revelation.

¹⁵ Lonergan here reads as does Henri de Lubac and Domingo Soto, taking the elicited desire as a sign of an innate desire to see God, a reading Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 335–36, shows wanting.

He writes: “the [conscious] question *quid sit Deus*, expresses a desire that arises naturally as soon as one knows the existence of God [and so, is an elicited desire].” And he continues: “This is but a corollary of the twofold affirmation that the desire to understand is natural [innate] and transcendental.”¹⁶ Evidently, we do not need revelation to know the existence of the elicited desire that “arises naturally” once we know the existence of God. No, but we do need revelation to know the existence of the innate desire of intellect, the tendency of intellect itself, unto the vision of God. Why does not the elicited desire, the conscious and wakeful desire to know what God is once we recognize the existence of a first cause, tell us all by itself of the innate desire of the intellect? Why does not the elicited desire—itsself something “natural”—tell us of the inclination of nature to the vision of God? Presumably, because whatever the natural desire of the intellect may be, it is something constitutive of the intellect. Innate desires are, as it were, structural. And therefore the innate desire to see God must be of something possible, else the very nature of intellect is self-contradictory and badly constructed. So, unless we know that quidditative knowledge of God is possible, we do not know whether there really is an innate natural tendency toward it constitutive of the intellect. And we do not know it is possible apart from Revelation. There can be no desire of nature, innate, for something impossible where the author of natures is the infinitely wise and good God. Human natural and innate appetite, although it does not proceed from human knowledge yet proceeds from some knowledge, namely God’s.¹⁷ Only with Revelation do we know the fact of our supernatural end, however, and so the real possibility of seeing God; and so only with Revelation could we know that the natural desire, the innate tendency, of the intellect were to such an object. Apart from Revelation, Lonergan says, the philosopher must be content with “paradox,” not knowing what the (“naturally” arising) elicited desire really indicates about our innate natural desire.¹⁸ We can have the elicited desire, whether or not the thing is possible, and just as Feingold points out, following Suárez, but we could not have the innate desire unless the thing were possible.¹⁹

¹⁶ Lonergan, “Natural Desire,” 86.

¹⁷ See the text in Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 641.

¹⁸ See similarly Francisco de Toledo, in Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 343.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 436. This elicited desire is conditional, not perfect or efficacious; perfect elicited desire depends on knowing the object possible, and this knowledge here depends on Revelation. The elicited and imperfect desire manifests, not an innate desire for vision, but an innate desire for knowledge, for truth—in short, for the *universal* object of the faculty, *ibid.*, 338–440.

As to the second question, the fulfillment of the desire remains conditional, but that does not mean for Lonergan that the desire itself is conditional, and certainly not in the way an elicited desire for an object impossible of attainment is conditional because dependent on a knowledge of the conditions of fulfillment. Lonergan grants that the elicited desire, as expressed by some such words as “I would like to know what God is,” and as spoken prior to faith, is not efficacious, for he holds that the meritorious and efficacious desire to see God is an act of supernatural charity or hope.²⁰ Still, the innate desire, the preconscious tendency of the intellect is absolute. “There is an inclination of the human intellect to know the quiddity of God.”²¹

The fulfillment is conditioned on grace and glory, but the desire is not conditioned. It is a natural desire; and natural desires, natural tendencies, are “on” under any condition in which the nature exists, and so are “unconditioned,” absolute. They are structural, built-in to the edifice as long as it stands. In other words, the natural desire of the power cannot be conditioned as is a velleity or some imperfect act of will, where the desire is elicited. As a natural desire, a tendency of the faculty, it is unconditional in the sense that it really and truly is a tendency—full, complete, perfect as such, and in its own order—to quidditative knowledge of God. Innate appetite is always absolute.²² Even so, Lonergan thinks it need not be fulfilled.

Feingold shows that (1) natural desire, or inclination, or tendency, and (2) the principles by which to attain the end, and (3) ordination to the end all belong together.²³ If we are not ordered to vision except by grace, and if the principles of attainment are grace and the theological virtues, then there is no natural desire for vision, no innate inclination to it. So also inclination, finality, and ordination all belong together.²⁴

For St. Thomas, vision exceeds natural inclination, innate inclination, as witness the many texts that Feingold assembles.²⁵ There is therefore no natural inclination of the intellect to vision.²⁶ There can be a natural inclination only to what is proportionate, and the natural inclination of the intellect to its proportionate object works through naturally given first principles; therefore, if the intellect is to be inclined to a supernatural end,

²⁰ Lonergan, “Natural Desire,” 90.

²¹ Lonergan, *De Ente*, 37, no. 72: “existit tendentia intellectus humani in quidditatem Dei cognoscendam.”

²² Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 563.

²³ *Ibid.*, 305, apropos of Sylvester of Ferrara.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 524.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 299–300.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 357–58.

it must be enhanced by a supernatural gift, another set of first principles, namely, the articles of faith. So *Summa theologiae* I–II, question 62, article 3:

The theological virtues order man to supernatural beatitude in the way that man is ordered to the end connatural to him through natural inclination. This happens in two respects, however: first, according to reason or intellect, insofar as it contains the first universal principles known to us by the natural light of the intellect, from which reason sets forth in both the speculative and the practical orders; second, by the rectitude of the will naturally tending to the good of reason.

But these two are not sufficient for the order of supernatural beatitude, according to 1 Corinthians 2:9, “Eye has not seen nor ear heard nor has it entered into the heart of man what God has prepared for those who love him.” Whence it is necessary that in both respects something be added to man supernaturally so that he be ordered to a supernatural end. And first, indeed, as to the intellect, certain supernatural principles are added to man, which are received by divine light, and these are the articles of faith [*credibilia*] about which is faith. Second, however, the will is ordered to that end both as to the motion of intention, tending to it as to what is possible to attain, which pertains to hope, and as to a kind of spiritual union, through which it is in some way transformed unto that end, which occurs through charity. For the appetite of each and every thing is naturally moved and tends unto the end connatural to it, and this motion proceeds from some conformity of the thing to its end.²⁷

Just as de Lubac makes an innate desire of the will do the job for which St. Thomas says charity or habitual grace are necessary, giving man a real inclination to a supernatural end, so Lonergan has an innate desire of intellect doing the job for which St. Thomas says the articles of faith are necessary, inclining the intellect to the vision of God.²⁸

This problem with the innate and so absolute character of the desire can be seen from another point of view. For notwithstanding its innate character, Lonergan characterizes the potency for its fulfillment, as has been indicated, as obediential. So, what St. Thomas keeps together, namely (1) a natural inclination, (2) of a natural passive potency, (3) the fulfillment of which is debitum, Lonergan breaks up: He wants a natural inclination, but in an obediential potency, whose fulfillment is not owed.²⁹ To make the potency obediential fits with his denying that the desire constitutes an

²⁷ See Feingold's use of this text in the important concluding section, *ibid.*, 641–43, and also 305 and 532.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 549–50. Since it functions as does charity, the very status of the desire as “natural” thus comes into question, as Feingold points out in this section of his book; see esp. 538, 548–49.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 207, 229, 234, 241, 647–48.

“exigence” for fulfillment, but not with saying the desire is innate.³⁰ It is Scotus and de Lubac, of course, who want an inclination to vision; but also, more congruently with Thomas’s usage, they want the potency to be characterized, not as obediential, or only as obediential, but as natural.³¹

For Lonergan, the natural desire is an innate natural desire for a supernatural state of affairs, a natural appetite for a supernatural fulfillment.³² Like Scotus, Lonergan asserts a non-exigent inclination of intellect to all intelligible objects, not just those it has the natural active power to make inform the possible intellect.³³ Lonergan, holding to a natural and innate inclination to vision, and holding also that man’s nature is defined by God on the supposition of his being called to a supernatural end (about which, see below), is therefore much closer to Henri de Lubac than to St. Thomas as Feingold gives us to understand him.

If Feingold is correct, therefore, Lonergan’s position is misleading as an expression of the thought of St. Thomas, and the remark Lonergan made apropos of William O’Connor’s work could be made about Lonergan’s work: “I do not think that the author has evaluated adequately the significance of Aquinas’s views on natural desire.”³⁴

Lonergan’s position is difficult to evaluate, however, and this is because of two ambiguities that push it in the direction of what Feingold would recognize as a correct exposition of St. Thomas.

First, in the discussion of a desire that he explicitly denies is elicited, he sometimes nevertheless slides quite unmistakably into a discussion of what can be nothing but an elicited desire to see God. So, he writes: “The natural desire is to know what God is. That natural desire neither includes nor excludes the Blessed Trinity. *It supposes knowledge that God is.*”³⁵ Therefore, it is an elicited desire. And just here, Lonergan invokes the solution of Sylvester of Ferrara to remove the paradox of having a natural desire for a supernatural state of affairs: The naturally elicited desire has for its object to know the essence of God and nothing else; it is not the desire for this knowledge as constituting our happiness; that desire is the

³⁰ The desire, Lonergan says, indicates a “capacity,” not an “exigence”; see his review of Buckley, *Man’s Last End*, 580.

³¹ Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 242, points out that for Scotus a natural potency with a natural inclination for a perfection can also be obediential, if only God can supply the perfection; and see his concluding remarks on this matter, *ibid.*, 280–81.

³² See Feingold’s exposition of the position of Jansenius and Arnauld, *ibid.*, 460.

³³ *Ibid.*, 228–29.

³⁴ Lonergan, review of O’Connor, *The Eternal Quest*, 126.

³⁵ Lonergan, “Natural Desire,” 90, emphasis added.

desire of vision as supernaturally beatifying, and that elicited (and perfect) desire depends on revelation and grace.³⁶ It is just this distinction for which Lonergan praises O'Connor.³⁷

Second, there is another ambiguity about exactly what Lonergan refers to in speaking of "natural desire." If the desire is not elicited, it is innate. But is it really an innate desire for the vision of God as the perfective act of the intellect, as for Scotus the desire is the innate *pondus* of the will toward vision as constituting beatitude? Lonergan speaks of the natural desire to see God—which seems determinate enough—as in fact something rather more indeterminate. So, he tells us, the desire and its fulfillment have the same material object, but not the same formal object: "[T]hus, the object of the natural desire is transcendental; but the object of the fulfilling vision is supernatural."³⁸ Again, the knowledge of God is presented, not as a determinate object to which there is an innate inclination, but as simply included within the scope of an intellect whose adequate object is the transcendental *ens*.³⁹ Writing in this context, the elicited desire to know God is just a "corollary" of a natural and transcendental desire to understand whatever there is.⁴⁰ Again, the natural and innate desire to understand is said to "extend" to understanding God.⁴¹ In this way, we seem very close indeed to Feingold's presentation, and perhaps it is useful to recall Lonergan's remark to the effect that the natural desire to see God is rather ill-named.⁴² Indeed it is if, as innate, it is really the natural and transcendental desire "to understand."

It is understandable that one so concentrated on the natural and transcendental desire to understand, so alive to the virtualities of the pure and unrestricted desire to know in understanding ourselves, God, and the world—it is understandable, I say, that such a one would find there a central element in understanding St. Thomas's assertion of a natural desire to see God.⁴³ In this regard, Fr. Lonergan cannot be faulted.

³⁶ See Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 310, 313–14.

³⁷ Lonergan, review of O'Connor, *The Eternal Quest*, 125.

³⁸ Lonergan, "Natural Desire," 90.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 86. See also *idem*, *De Ente*, 84–85, where the natural and innate desire to know "extends" to the quiddity of God.

⁴⁰ Lonergan, "Natural Desire," 86.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 87; also *idem*, *De Ente*, 84–85, where the natural and innate desire to know "extends" to the quiddity of God.

⁴² Lonergan, *De Ente*, 36, no. 68.

⁴³ In this respect, what Lonergan expressly says about the natural desire to see God can be found in quite another form in *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957, 1970), ch. 19, "General Transcendent Knowledge."

Notwithstanding the invitation latent in Lonergan's text to distinguish the natural desire to know the truth, the natural desire whence naturally arises the elicited desire to know God once we know he exists, from a determinately characterized desire to know the essence of God, there remains a last matter which is not, it would seem, amenable to such a negotiation. To be sure, this is the issue of "pure nature." Lonergan thinks its possibility a "marginal theorem." It is a marginal theorem if it cannot be strictly demonstrated from the gratuity of grace.⁴⁴ Feingold, evidently, adheres to the view that it is to be demonstrated from the gratuity of grace and so is not marginal at all. For the gratuity of grace implies that there can be no innate and natural desire for vision;⁴⁵ it is just such a desire, however, that implies the impossibility of a state of pure nature.⁴⁶ So, the impossibility of such a desire, following from the gratuity of grace, means that a state of pure nature is possible. For an innate appetite, Feingold reminds us, is determined to one end; if the end is natural, there is no innate desire for vision, and if there is a desire for vision, there is no innate desire for a natural end.⁴⁷ No innate desire for vision means innate desire is for a natural end, and this implies the possibility of "pure nature."

Lonergan inclines to the possibility of a world and a humanity without grace, but thinks the affirmation of such possibility unimportant. This view, that the affirmation of the possibility of a purely natural world is marginal to Catholic dogmatics, he thinks follows from what he calls the priority of world order to individual natures. As it were, the controlling element of the divine ordering wisdom is the order of all things in the world and their ordination to him. Granted the determination of this order and how things are ordered to him, there follows the determination of the specific natures of the things of the world, together with the natural desires that constitute these natures.⁴⁸ Nature, and so natural desire, is a function of world order. In fact, world order is supernatural, and we are destined to see God as the perfecting beatitude of our natures. Therefore, we are given the nature we have, together with its natural desire, in view of this end. Lonergan does not say in so many words that the natural desire to see God is a function of our

⁴⁴ Lonergan, "Natural Desire," 94.

⁴⁵ Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 668.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 666.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 662; and see 620–25.

⁴⁸ Lonergan, "Natural Desire," 88, 93. The question of the priority of world order arises also for Lonergan from the fact that while the natural law is naturally knowable, it cannot be kept without grace; *ibid.*, 90. Note that the distinction between world order and finite natures does not occur in the *De Ente* of 1946.

being called to a supernatural end, of the supernatural character of the existing “world order.” But if it means anything in the context of discussing the natural desire to see God, his emphasis on the priority of world order to nature means that because we are ordered to a supernatural end, *therefore* God has built into us the desire of nature, the innate and natural tendency (absolute, in fact) to see God. This is exactly like de Lubac, it seems: I am what I am only because God has called me to himself.⁴⁹

Moreover, it seems to follow for Lonergan that some “concrete possibility” relative to this, that, or the other nature and its end is determinable only according as a world order is “concretely” determined, which is to say “complete down to its least historical detail.”⁵⁰ In the absence of our being able to think out a world order to that degree of concreteness—which in fact is possible only for the divine mind—we cannot say with certainty whether man as we know him could exist *puris in naturalibus*.

If this is the upshot, and I say “if” because Lonergan moves very fast here and his text is very compressed, I can think of four problems. First, it seems to imply that not every created intellect, just as such, would have the “transcendental” scope our intellects do in fact have. For the natural desire to see God is strictly a function for Lonergan of that transcendental scope. This would mean that it is really possible to have an intellect whose adequate object is not being, an intellect that would not include the First Cause in its scope, an intellect that would not naturally ask “What is God?” upon the knowledge that God exists. For recall, the conscious question manifests the natural desire; if there is no natural desire to see God, then there is no manifestation of it. I do not believe this could be countenanced by one for whom “the pure notion of being is the detached, disinterested, unrestricted desire to know,” the idea of being “the content of an act of understanding that grasps everything about everything,” the primary component of which is “identical with the unrestricted act” itself of understanding everything about everything, and for whom “it is one and the same thing to understand what being is and to understand what God is.”⁵¹

Second, and following on this first problem, we are led by Lonergan’s argument to determine a quite “concrete possibility” on the supposition that a world without a supernatural ordination is possible, namely the possibility of an intellect whose scope does not extend to wondering what God is. This is not the certain knowledge that *man* might exist *puris in naturalibus*, which knowledge as certain Lonergan forbids us. But it is the certain knowledge

⁴⁹ Henri de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Crossroad, 1967, 1998), 64, 77–81.

⁵⁰ Lonergan, “Natural Desire,” 93.

⁵¹ Lonergan, *Insight*, 642, 644, 646, 658.

that *some* intellectual or rational creature might so exist, and it seems to be a knowledge such as he forbids us to have, that is, a certain knowledge of a nature in the absence of the knowledge of the concrete world order, complete down to its last atom, in which such an intellect would exist.

Third, and following on the last, the conception of such an intellect is in fact impossible. If the questions for judgment and understanding—Is it? What is it?—really do define the intellect and tell us what it is, what its scope is, what its end is, then an intellect for which there could be a reality of which we would not ask “What is it?” is an impossibility and an impossibility most certainly according to Fr. Lonergan’s lights.⁵²

These considerations by no means imply that Lonergan’s point about the priority of world order to the exact shapes of natural kinds in the world is to be gainsaid. We may well grant that the divine practical wisdom, as John Wright puts it, is “first concerned with the divine goodness itself: in which of the many possible ways open to Him was it to be shared.”⁵³ But the above considerations appeal to the sort of, shall we say, transcendental analysis of intellect that Lonergan was himself so adept at. In any possible world, intellect, under whatever specifying determinations, must be such as to have as its adequate object just what Lonergan says it does. From this it will necessarily follow that, knowing God exists, such persons will naturally want to know what he is. In other words, the “principal parts of the universe,” those intellectual or rational creatures to whom the divine goodness is to be manifested and in which manifestation the end of the universe is to be found, have a sort of density of generic nature according to which some things must be true of them in any possible arrangement of creation. This in fact Lonergan seems almost to envisage. He says that for the argument from a finite nature and the necessarily finite character of its proportionate end to be sound, we should have to assume “that the parts in question [men and angels] determine the whole, that finite natures are prior to and determine world order.”⁵⁴ The argument here so far is to the effect that, while the generic nature of created mind need not be taken to determine everything about world order, it does indeed determine *some* things about world order. For instance, the existence of rational creatures would seem to require that non-rational creatures serve them.⁵⁵ For St. Thomas, and on Feingold’s

⁵² Cf. Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 576; and for Lonergan, the immediately preceding note.

⁵³ John H. Wright, SJ, *The Order of the Universe in the Theology of St. Thomas* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1957), 191–92, note 2. This dissertation was directed by Lonergan.

⁵⁴ Lonergan, “Natural Desire,” 93.

⁵⁵ Wright, *Order*, 156ff., 193.

showing, because intellectual and rational natures must naturally desire to know God, once his existence is known, these natures also indicate the supreme and most beautiful fittingness that the order of the world be a supernatural one, the order of this world.⁵⁶

Fourth and last, prior to idea of world order there is the idea of world itself, that is, creation. That whatever is created, moreover, cannot have an exigence for or be owed what is proper to the uncreated would seem to be a principle for whatever world order there is. Therefore, there can be no innate desire for the vision of God that belongs to any created nature in any order of things. Is whatever glitter such an argument has a function of vicious abstraction? “Concrete possibility” is not to be asserted from a simple consideration of nature and its exigencies, Lonergan writes. Feingold agrees and notes that every consideration of natures is “abstract.” The “concrete” belongs to individuals in history.⁵⁷ Even so, the concrete and the historical are functions of the material and the accidental, and do not determine innate natural desires, which are part of the “abstract” nature itself.⁵⁸ Therefore, they cannot determine what is *debitum naturae* or destroy the possibility of a beatitude proportionate to the nature.

I am concerned in pointing out this fourth problem, however, to put things in terms of creation itself. The possibility of a purely natural order, inscribed in the idea of nature, is inscribed also in the idea of creation, and rests squarely on the adequacy of the distinction between uncreated and created reality, or, to put it otherwise, on the assertion of the transcendence of God.

As Feingold abundantly shows, what is innately and naturally desired is owed. This thought can be developed. What is owed, we might say, belongs to the thing, and what belongs to a thing is a sort of part of the thing.⁵⁹ Therefore, to say that God’s own understanding of himself or his own happiness is innately desired by a creature, is tantamount to saying that it is a part of the created order, just as such. It is to say, as it were, that God can create some world order of which he is a part. Which is to say that just by the act of creation, just by the act of distinguishing what is not him from himself, he makes himself a part of what is not him. The distinguishing is not therefore successful; and he is both a part of creation (because owed to the desire of the creature) and not a part of it (because

⁵⁶ Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 607.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 545.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 545–46.

⁵⁹ Cf. St. Thomas, *In librum beati Dionysii de Divinis Nominibus expositio*, IV, lect. 9, no. 406 (Marietti). So to speak, God would be owing to human nature as are hands, parts of the nature.

transcendent Creator). The act of creation seems as it were to self-destruct. But no. What is owing to a created nature is of the earth, earthly, and cannot be anything proper to heaven, however characterized—whether the divine love or the divine understanding or the divine happiness, all of which things are the divine nature itself. Therefore, the very transcendence of God, or otherwise expressed, the very adequacy of the distinction between creature and Creator, requires that vision be gratuitous, and therefore an innate natural desire for vision be impossible, and therefore that whatever created order there be comprise a natural beatitude proportionate to rational and intellectual creatures.

This point can be put in a different way. Suppose with Plotinus one thinks the world and the human soul necessarily proceed from God, the One-Good, as it were, by necessity of nature.⁶⁰ Then, whatever one may say about the transcendence and unknowability and unnameability of God, it will be true to say also and paradoxically that there is a sort of continuity of nature between God and the world, such that the soul's ascent to God and its union with God will be just as "natural" as its procession from God. Therefore, if the soul proceeds from the One-Good by necessity of nature, so its end will be by nature—which is to say, by its origin and by the content it brings from that origin—union with God. For Plotinus, after all, the higher part of the soul remains in some fashion always with the Divine Mind.⁶¹ In the very establishment of what is not the One, there is established both the desire and the power of return.⁶²

To the contrary, "it must be said that, since the creature proceeds from God in diversity of nature, God is outside the order of the whole of creation, nor is it from his nature that he has a relation to creatures. For he

⁶⁰ There is still justice in this formulation, even if the world follows from what the One is only because the One has first (eternally) willed himself to be what he is, the undiminished source of the world. See John Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 82–83; and earlier, Jean Trouillard, *La Procession Plotinienne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955), 76–80. An especially good treatment of the freedom and necessity of Plotinian procession is A. Hilary Armstrong's "Two Views of Freedom: A Christian Objection in Plotinus, *Enneads* VI.8 [39] 7, 11–15?" in *Studia Patristica*, vol. 17, pt. 1 (New York: Pergamon Press, 1982), 397–406.

⁶¹ A. Hilary Armstrong, "Salvation, Plotinian and Christian," *Downside Review* 75 (1957): 132–34. More, that the soul know and desire God supposes an already established likeness to God; see René Arnou, *Le Désir de Dieu dans la philosophie de Plotin* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1921, 1967), 148–53. Note in St. Thomas, *ST* I–II, q. 62, a. 3, c, quoted above, where just such a likeness, correlative with ordination unto God, is likewise posited, but is supernatural, and see Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 650–53.

⁶² Armstrong, "Salvation," 128.

does not produce creatures from necessity of his nature, but by intellect and will.”⁶³ So, St. Thomas further concludes, there is no real relation of God to the creature. Furthermore and from the other side, while this diversity of nature does not of course exclude a real relation of dependence of the creature on God, it does mean that what belongs to the divine nature as such cannot belong to the creature, and that the creature can have no natural operation that naturally possesses it of what belongs to God.

The gratuity of creation, then, a part of the Christian adjustment of neo-Platonism, just of itself implies also the distinct and so double gratuity of sharing the beatitude of God. The One is hardly to be conceived apart from what (willingly) flows from him, but the doctrine of creation requires us to think the possibility that the world might not exist.⁶⁴ The liberality of the One is such as of itself to bring to pass the overflow of being and the world, and of itself to install into what overflows the capacity to return. It must be (not by chance, but neither by coercion) that God create, and likewise it must be that we return. Neither of these necessities, however, survives the first article of the creed.⁶⁵

So, if gratuity of grace shows the possibility of pure nature as Feingold argues, and if it as tied to the transcendence of God and the very meaning and gratuity of creation as I have tried briefly to indicate, it is no marginal theorem.

Writing in 1949 on the question of man’s end and the question of pure nature, Lonergan said:

If the history of the matter is becoming clearer, the speculative issues are so complex that a generous lapse of time will have to be granted, I suspect, before all concealed suppositions have been detected and a sound judgment can be passed upon the relative merits of the medieval and the Renaissance positions.⁶⁶

A very just prediction of Fr. Lonergan, very justly fulfilled by Lawrence Feingold. N V

⁶³ ST I, q. 28, a. 1, ad 3.

⁶⁴ Robert Sokolowski, *The God of Faith and Reason* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), 31–33.

⁶⁵ Trouillard expressly likens the neo-Platonist view of the relation of the natural and the supernatural to that of Blondel (and so of de Lubac); see his “Procession néoplatonicienne et création judeo-chrétienne,” in *Néoplatonisme: mélanges offerts à Jean Trouillard*, Cahiers de Fontenay 19–22 (Fontenay-aux-Roses, 1981), 13–15.

⁶⁶ Lonergan, review of Buckley, *Man’s Last End*, 579.