

## Lonergan on Pride

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**Abstract:** This article explores the relative lack of attention to the sin of pride in Bernard Lonergan, a lack he shares with Aquinas, in contrast to the Augustinian tradition. In order to explain this lack the article considers the dialectical nature of pride leading in turns to suggest a slightly surprising detour into the origins of social structures which Lonergan explains in terms of 'challenge and response.' Most significant is the redemptive response to the challenge of sin, and it is here that we can discover Lonergan's delicate transposition of traditional teaching in his deployment of the concept of general bias.

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**Key Words:** Lonergan, Pride, Sociology, General Bias, Redemption

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**I**n his striking presentation of the enduring insights of Bernard Lonergan, Michael H. McCarthy recommends Lonergan as a Christian humanist who sought to respond to the cultural challenges of his time. One of the many brilliant points that McCarthy makes regards Lonergan's understanding of authenticity as self-transcendence. This phrase is used, not only as the title of his book, but also as one of the sections in the second essay. It captures, perhaps, the delicate tension between Lonergan's Christianity and his humanism. So, for example, McCarthy explains that a comprehensive moral philosophy requires

a normative account of our troubled and uneven moral development and frank recognition of the diverse moral sources on which that development actually depends ... It also requires an equally frank recognition of the sources of moral impotence and decline: dramatic, egoistic, group and *general bias* ... It also requires genuine *humility* and candour. ... We are never really alone, we are never the autonomous agents our exalted *pride* would like us to be.<sup>1</sup>

In this passage, in which emphases have been added to indicate the central claim of the present article, McCarthy has brought together a technical term of Lonergan's devising ('general bias') with a traditional theme of Christian ethics, (humility and pride). Although the association is not stressed by McCarthy, I would like to propose that this insight is genuine—in some sense, general bias *is* to be associated with the sin of pride. It may, however, be a slightly surprising insight, for Lonergan seldom referred to the sin of pride, and seems coy about identifying the deadly sin with general bias. Nevertheless, a rather indirect exploration of the places in which this term is introduced, namely, *Insight's* account of the origins of (redemptive) social structures, will perhaps make McCarthy's

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<sup>1</sup> Michael H. McCarthy, *Authenticity as Self-Transcendence: The Enduring Insights of Bernard Lonergan* (Indiana: Notre Dame, 2015) 179.

insight more prominent. Hopefully, this circuitous route will be rewarded by a more perspicuous view of Lonergan's account of human sin.

Lonergan's lack of attention to the sin of pride may be contrasted with one of his sources, the phenomenologist, Dietrich von Hildebrand, who frequently tracked sin down to its roots in 'pride and concupiscence.'<sup>2</sup> This seems indicative of a more general difference in attitudes that Christian theologians have taken to the great sin, for a cursory glance at the writings of St Augustine will uncover abundant references to pride and its opposite virtue, humility, whilst an examination of the *Summa Theologiae* reveals a dearth.

One reason, perhaps, for this divergence in emphasis regards the difference in argumentative styles: where Augustine is forthright, Aquinas is more delicate. Lonergan follows Aquinas. Quite generally, both offer transpositions; they are 'perfecting and augmenting the old with the new.' For Aquinas, the old was the Christian tradition mediated by Augustine, and the new was Aristotelian philosophy: in this transposition the familiar tension between faith and reason gets played out in a dialectic between sin and vice. I will support this interpretation by drawing on the work of Eileen Sweeney, who explains how Aquinas attenuated this dialectic. Something similar may be discerned in the works of Bernard Lonergan. His transposition of Aquinas sought to accommodate modern science, modern philosophy, and modern history,<sup>3</sup> and this included modern *social* science. This point is stressed because, as indicated, the notion of general bias is introduced in the context of social theory. This may help us grasp how the under-explication of pride in the work of Lonergan is linked with his preference for a softer tone.

I will take note, then, of a remarkable (and somewhat neglected) analysis in fundamental sociology. By drawing on Arnold J. Toynbee's schema of 'challenge and response,' Lonergan was able to suggest a novel solution to the problem of how to understand the origins of social structures. This approach to social ontology, which stands up well when compared with contemporary explanations of the origins of social structures, holds some promise for the theologian. For within this discovery (which is presented in the seventh chapter of *Insight*, 'Common sense as object') we find (to adapt a phrase from Sartre) a worm lying at the heart of social being. Here we may obtain an insight into our problem of pride, for Lonergan's ontology contains the response to this challenge. When we understand this, moreover, we will acquire not only an insight into the delicacy with which Lonergan characterises human sin, but also some understanding of how Lonergan understood redemption in a unified manner.

## THE DIALECTIC OF PRIDE

According to St Thomas Aquinas, 'Augustine says that "almost the whole of Christian teaching is humility."<sup>4</sup>This, however, is surprising because Aquinas himself rarely seems to accent the virtue and its opposite vice, a point recently reiterated by Sheryl Overmyer. Although her article is of no direct relevance to Lonergan's thought, it may serve to

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<sup>2</sup> Dietrich Von Hildebrand, *Transformation in Christ* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1990) 149–51.

<sup>3</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers: 1965-1980* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2004) 428–9.

<sup>4</sup> ST. 1.2.161.2 ob. 2. Overmyer (see below) takes this as her epigraph.

contextualise the socio-political dimensions of pride. Thus, she notes that there has been a recent abundance of writing on humility in Aquinas, especially recommending his treatment as an antidote to post-modern problems, but, she continues, this is a distraction for, as a matter of fact, the *Summa Theologiae* devotes just one of its 512 questions to humility.<sup>5</sup> Overmyer believes that whilst the enthusiasm of modern scholars for a recovery of this virtue is to be applauded, the Thomist account is too thin, and in this respect Thomas is not true to the tradition. She cites Servais Pinkaers to the effect that Thomas relies too much on his philosophical sources in this regard.

Overmyer would prefer that humility was exalted, and in discussing the *Summa's* treatment, she notes that humility is situated within the context of the (less) important virtue of temperance rather than the 'more excellent virtue' of justice. She believes that this may provide a clue to a restructured presentation that brings out the 'political' features that humility shares with justice, and here finds inspiration from the larger Thomist corpus including his commentaries on scripture and the Creed.<sup>6</sup> The key point is that the humility that is the foundation for Christian morals is to be grounded in Christ—as obvious as it is, this point has been neglected in the subsequent commentary. Thus in the commentary of Jesus' baptism in the *Gospel of Matthew*, John says to Jesus:

'I ought to be baptized by you, and you come to me?'

And Jesus answering, said to him: 'suffer it be so now. For so becomes us to fulfil all justice' Then he suffered him.<sup>7</sup>

Overmyer particularly notes the relevance of *justice* to this subjection. She gives other examples that underline the importance of Christ's example for an understanding of the Christian virtue of humility. She cites a text from Aquinas to the effect that example speaks louder than words, and this seems especially appropriate.<sup>8</sup> The salient point being that pride will find it humiliating to submit to the precept, be humble, but the proud person may yet be softened when served by humble of heart. Only in this manner, it would seem, can humility communicate effectively to the proud of heart.

In the 'dialectic of pride and humility,' (so to speak) Aquinas seems to downplay pride. To explain such revisionism, Eileen Sweeney examines Aquinas' discussion of vice

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<sup>5</sup> Sheryl Overmyer, 'Exalting the Meek Virtue of Humility in Aquinas.' *Heythrop Journal*, Vol. 56, No. 4 (2015) 650–662. Overmyer references Shawn Floyd, 'Can Humility Be a Deliberative Virtue?' in *The Schooled Heart: Moral Formation in American Higher Education*, ed., Douglas Henry and Michael Beaty (Baylor University Press, 2007): 155–170. Catherine Hudak Klancer, 'How Opposites (should) Attract: Humility as a Virtue for the Strong,' *Heythrop Journal* (2012): 662–677. Joseph Lawrence Tadie, *Between humilities: A retrieval of Saint Thomas Aquinas on the virtue of humility*, Ph. D. Dissertation. Boston College. (Ann Arbor, University Microfilms International, 2006). Michael Keating, 'The Strange Case of the Self-Dwarfing Man: Modernity, Magnanimity, and Thomas Aquinas.' *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*. Vol. 10. No. 4. (2007) 55–76. Michael Foley, 'Thomas Aquinas' Novel Modesty.' *History of Political Thought*. Vol. XXV. No. 3. (2004) 402–423. Mary Keys, 'Aquinas and the Challenge of Aristotelian Magnanimity.' *History of Political Thought*. Vol. XXIV. No. 1 (2003): 37–65. Mary Keys, 'A 'Monkish Virtue' outside the Monastery: On the Social and Civic Value of Humility.' Working paper submitted to the Religion and Culture Web Forum, University of Chicago (May 2004) available via <http://divinity.uchicago.edu/martycenter/publications/webforum/062004/> accessed July 16, 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Overmyer, *Exalting the Meek*, 657.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 658.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 659.

and sin in terms of an expanded version of a dialectic that she finds in Paul Ricoeur.<sup>9</sup> On Sweeney's account, *The Symbolism of Evil* argues that the Hebrew Bible contains two different notions of sin, one legalistic, and another prophetic. The prophetic demand makes an absolute demand on the sinful human being. Standing opposite is the legal approach which breaks down the absolute demand into particular demands. A dialectic is set up: one views human evil as a transgression of an abstract ethical standard or value set by no one in particular, the other sees an unlimited demand set by the wholly other.

The legalistic view is also essentially rationalistic. Reason first articulates specific moral imperatives that can then be acted upon. It then interprets, justifies, and prioritizes those imperatives.<sup>10</sup>

Sweeney expands this legalistic approach to take in the rationalistic approaches of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle which would "locate moral obligation in the obligation to one's own happiness and fulfillment."

Sweeney appropriates a Kantian term, heteronomy, to describe the opposite: "the realization that one's own standards do not constitute the whole of the world of value, and that one's grasp of the good and the right is limited not only by one's ability to act ethically but even to imagine it."<sup>11</sup> Thus, the prophetic view not only expresses an unconditional demand, but situates it in the demand of the other. In general, the modern era embraces the former, autonomous approach, with exceptions to be found in Blaise Pascal, Søren Kierkegaard, and possibly Emmanuel Levinas.<sup>12</sup> Sweeney argues that in Aquinas both 'autonomous' and 'heteronomous' approaches exist, and are placed in tension:

Pride arguably does not even exist in the Platonic or Aristotelian catalogs of vice; however it has a central place in Aquinas's account. Pride is the first sin, the source of all other sins, and the worst sin. He defines sin as an excessive desire for one's own excellence which rejects subjection to God (ST. 1.2.162.1, 5).<sup>13</sup>

She explains that his discussion of vice and sin represents an 'attenuation of this dialectic.' Thus, although the *Secunda secundae* depicts pride as the original sin, and as defiance of God provides the motivation for further sins, pride is also regarded in terms of excess, and contrary to right reason. Humility and magnanimity are 'parallel and compatible instead of opposites.'<sup>14</sup> In this way the gap between the religious (heteronomy) and the secular (autonomy) is lessened, as it were.

Here it may be worth pausing to note the dialectical nature of pride. It presupposes an opposite number but exalts in autonomy. Hildebrand finds pride standing opposite true values. Overmyer wishes to exalt humility, and finds it valorised in the *example* of Christ. Sweeney envisions yet another dialectic, and sees in the tension between sin and vice a

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<sup>9</sup> E. Sweeney, 'Vice and Sin' in Stephen J. Pope (ed.), *The Ethics of Aquinas*, (Washington D.C.: Georgetown, 2002) 151-168.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

contest, almost, of faith and reason, and so of two opposed standpoints: the religious and the secular, one indeed, that may shed light on Lonergan's strategy in his engagement with humanism.

Let us now, then, examine the stance that Lonergan took to our secular age, first by recalling his sparse references to pride, second, by considering a contemporary approach to a sociological question, and third by giving an exposition of Lonergan's 'dialectics of history.'<sup>15</sup> This will lead naturally to a consideration of Lonergan's unified view of the redemption.

### LONERGAN'S REFERENCES TO PRIDE

Lonergan made an early reference to pride in 1952: 'If disobedience is explained as being rooted in pride, that pride itself remains unexplained, and so ultimately we arrive at the irrational, something that is objectively false.'<sup>16</sup> In *Insight*, there is just one reference to pride, but a couple more to cognates. We are told that insights may be brushed aside in an emotional reaction of 'distaste, pride, dread, horror, revulsion.'<sup>17</sup> Again, in the context of the loss of hegemony, Lonergan writes of those who live in the past, leaving only 'proud memories and impotent dreams.' And on linguistic variations he writes of those 'with a proud sense of tradition.'<sup>18</sup> Regarding mythic consciousness and the gap between the anticipation of insight and its attainment, Lonergan warns: 'It is through this gap that there proudly march the speculative gnostic and the practical magician.'<sup>19</sup> Finally, having indicated the supernatural solution to the problem of evil and the humanist rejection of such a response, Lonergan refers to: 'man's proud content to be just a man.'<sup>20</sup> In *Method in Theology*, the solitary remark explains:

If passions are to quiet down, if wrongs are to be not exacerbated, not ignored, not merely palliated, but acknowledged and removed, then human possessiveness and human pride have to be replaced by religious charity, by the charity of the suffering servant, by self-sacrificing love.<sup>21</sup>

In *Healing and Creating in History* Lonergan records Karl Popper's reading of Lord Russell:

Our evil national pride has prevented us from achieving the world state in time. To put this view in a nutshell: we are clever, perhaps too clever, but we are also wicked; and this measure of cleverness and wickedness lies at the root of our troubles.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> For the magisterial statement see Robert M. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1990). In my presentation below I will, however, highlight Toynbee's 'challenge and response,' a point not addressed by Doran. For Doran on the constitution of society, see Robert M. Doran, *What is Systematic Theology*, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2005) 174–7.

<sup>16</sup> Lonergan is explaining the lack of intelligibility of sin in 'The notion of fittingness' in Bernard Lonergan, *Early Latin Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011) 489.

<sup>17</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) 215.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 568.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 565.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 750.

<sup>21</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972) 117.

<sup>22</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *A Third Collection* (New York: Paulist, 1985) 100.

In the unpublished *Supplement to the Incarnate Word* there are two more references. Lonergan refers to the teaching of scripture, that God resists the proud and gives his grace to the humble (1 Pet 5:5; Jas 4:6; Prov 3: 34). Finally, in the context of ‘the historical order of justice,’ Lonergan attributes all evils to pride and alienation from God.<sup>23</sup>

These appear to be the only instances in over twenty volumes of Lonergan’s works. Why is this? The connection with the redemption and history provides a clue. To follow this up, however, requires an excursion into Lonergan’s contribution to social ontology. In preparation for this I shall set the context by drawing on a more modern contribution to social theory.

### CHRISTIAN SMITH ON THE PERSONAL ORIGINS OF SOCIAL STRUCTURES

Insight into the nature of Lonergan’s project may be prompted by a recent work in sociology that has raised a salient question. In *What is a person?* Christian Smith has made out a strong case for critical realist personalism, having seriously engaged with much contemporary social theory. Of particular interest is a contribution to a theoretical question that he finds neglected, namely: What brings social structures into being? Smith follows the work of critical realists (Roy Bhaskar, Margaret Archer, Douglas Porpora) who hold that societies are real, stratified, emergent entities. Thus, social structures are regarded durable patterns of relations.<sup>24</sup> This, however, does not negate the emergent reality of personhood. Unlike structuralism or functionalism (which in various ways are influenced by Durkheim), the critical realists reject the idea that society (or ‘structure’) exerts a one-way influence on agency. They also seek to do justice to the insights of the various ‘interpretative’ schools that admit the phenomenology of the person, and appreciate that societies are the outcomes of personal agents. A balance, then, needs to be affirmed between agency and structure. Although agents do indeed bring about changes in society, they do so, not by creating it (for society is prior to each individual at birth) but by reshaping it, changing society by the (at times) unintentional consequences of individual actions. By way of comparison, we might consider language. It exists prior to any individual speaker, but on the other hand, it is reproduced or transformed only as individual speakers use the language.

On the neglected question of origins, Smith bases his case on the nature of the person, in particular, the tension between limitation and transcendence that pertains to the human condition. From his rich definition of a person as ‘a conscious, reflexive, embodied, self-transcending centre of subjective experience, durable identity, moral commitment, and social communication who—as the efficient cause of his or her own responsible actions and interactions—exercises complex capacities for agency and intersubjectivity in order to develop and sustain his or her own incommunicable self in

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<sup>23</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *Supplement to The Incarnate Word* (unpublished material available at The Lonergan Center, Boston College) articles 7 and 10.

<sup>24</sup> We might think of the property relations in capitalism. For Bhaskar’s presentation see Roy Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism* (Brighton: Harvester Press: 1979) 34–46. For a discussion of social theory that brings Bhaskar into conversation with Lonergan, see Neil Ormerod ‘Dialectical engagement with the social sciences in an ecclesial context.’ *Theological Studies* 66 (2005). Ormerod also discusses the approach of John Milbank.

loving relationships with other personal selves and with the nonpersonal world'<sup>25</sup> he points us toward the 'natural capacities and limitations of human persons and the creative tensions that arise between them.'<sup>26</sup> He illustrates his solution by a brilliant metaphor. 'Human social life, I suggest, is the magma that erupts and builds up, so to speak, at the fault lines where natural human capacities meet and grind against and over natural human limitations''<sup>27</sup> and finds that it is '*the natural drive toward a sustained and thriving personal life broadly*—more so than motivations for, say, material advantage, relational dominance, or ontological security more exclusively—when confronted with our natural limitations, *that generates social structures out of human existence.*' For example, the family may be seen as a response to the challenge of how persons are to flourish.

### LONERGAN ON THE DIALECTICS OF HISTORY

The solution that Smith gives to the origins of social structures may, I believe, help us understand Lonergan's contribution to social ontology that he had made over sixty years previously, for, I suggest, Lonergan's embryonic sociological foundations tackle precisely this issue, and result in an equally profound solution.<sup>28</sup> *Insight*, of course, was a study of the act of human understanding and Lonergan was explicit that 'there is no point to a full and accurate account of the fields of psychology [the theme of the sixth chapter] and of sociology [tackled in this seventh chapter].' Still, he concludes that 'the notion of insight is indispensable in an adequate view.'<sup>29</sup>

Lonergan's argument in that seventh chapter 'Common sense as object,' then, is based on his understanding of practical intelligence in the pattern of experience that he calls 'common sense'—that pattern in which things are related to us, as distinct from science in which things are related to one another. Lonergan, however, believes that both science and common sense may be understood by what he calls 'generalized empirical method'—an idea that he introduces in this chapter.<sup>30</sup> Briefly, the idea is that knowing arises on three levels of experience, understanding, and judgement, with the notion of experience being generalized to include both the data of sense and the data of consciousness.<sup>31</sup> Thus Lonergan can agree with the positivists as to the possibility of a unified science on condition that 'data' are taken in a broad sense. Such data must include the acts of understanding that arise in practical activity.

Lonergan's analysis of practical intelligence begins by considering Arnold J. Toynbee's schema of 'challenge and response'<sup>32</sup> that Lonergan had encountered in reading *A Study of History* and which, we may suppose, Lonergan wanted to transpose into more

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<sup>25</sup> Christian Smith, *What is a Person? Rethinking Humanity, Social Life, and the Moral Good from the Person Up* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2010) 61.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 331.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 331.

<sup>28</sup> Smith is a contemporary sociologist tackling the origin of social structures. He says that the question has been neglected, but actually Lonergan dealt with it in Ch7 where he introduced cosmopolis and general bias. I think there are commonalities with Lonergan and Smith on the origins of social structures

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 268

<sup>30</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 268.

<sup>31</sup> The finish touches to generalized empirical method (which also inquires into data constituted by meaning) are added in Lonergan, *Third Collection*, 140.

<sup>32</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 234.

explanatory categories.<sup>33</sup> This idea, in which Toynbee wrestles with the question of the genesis of civilizations, provides the key for Lonergan's account of the 'enormous structures'<sup>34</sup> of technology, economics, politics, and culture. Thus, the creation of a fishing-net may be regarded as a response to the challenge of recurrent desires for a particular good, (fish), and Lonergan points out that in *each* age there is a measure and structure of capital formation that has the function of accelerating the flow of particular goods.<sup>35</sup> In this manner, man extends his control over nature. Lonergan, however, notes that in the concomitant division of labor with its need for a distribution of goods, in fact, man is also extending his control over man.<sup>36</sup> Thus the need arises for an economic system. Moreover, the polity, too, has functionality, for as he later put it, 'there is a need for leaders in times of stress.'<sup>37</sup> Lonergan does not regard power simply in terms of the proud struggle to dominate, but in the context of responses to communal challenges—Lonergan finds that power is rooted in cooperation.

Still, Lonergan has no intention of naively endorsing the status quo. In accounting for the development of civilization, Lonergan discerns two principles within a growing society, a 'base' (or infrastructure) of intersubjective spontaneity (family, tribe, clan) out of which will arise a superstructural level of civil society associated with the ever growing structures (technology, economy, polity).<sup>38</sup> Tension arises in the community: intersubjective spontaneity and intelligently devised social order possess different properties and different tendencies.<sup>39</sup> Thus arises the 'dialectic' of community—dialectic, here refers to the 'concrete unfolding of linked but opposed principles of change.'

So it is that Lonergan begins to discuss bias, that is, a radical interference with the 'pure desire to know,'—for Lonergan, the spirit of inquiry is the fundamental principle of social progress even as bias is the radical principle of social decline. Particularly relevant to social theory is individual bias (on the right, so to speak), and opposing this (on the left), group bias.<sup>40</sup> In virtue of the distortions of bias, where we should find a normative pattern in which concrete situations give rise to insights that lead to actions that change the initial situation so that fresh insights arise in a virtuous circle of progress (this is the pattern of challenge and response that Toynbee had drawn using descriptive categories), we find instead the narrowing of a vicious circle in which situations become infected by an irrational element that Lonergan terms the 'social surd'—the cumulative effect of refusing insights. For this reason, the concrete operations of society cannot be identified with the

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<sup>33</sup> Toynbee draws his categories from the Greeks, and Goethe, the Bible, and Shakespeare. See Bernard Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-1964* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1996) 64–5. Lonergan cites Toynbee: as illustrating how human intelligence works in history, Bernard Lonergan, *Topics In Education The Cincinnati Lectures of 1959 on the Philosophy of Education* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1993) 53; in connection with the religious infrastructure, Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers: 1965-1980*, 268; in connection with the creative minority who respond to challenges, Bernard Lonergan, *Early Works in Theological Method I* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2010); and in about thirty other places even up to 1982.

<sup>34</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 232.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 258.

<sup>37</sup> Lonergan, *Third Collection*, 7.

<sup>38</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 237–9.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 241.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 244–250, and note k on 793. See also, Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers: 1965-1980*, 366.

human good (as perhaps, functionalist social theory might aver). The human good, then, does exist as a concretely operating 'order' within society, but it cannot blithely be identified with society. Furthermore, not only does the social include more than the human good, but for Lonergan, the human good includes more than the social. That is to say, 'within' society Lonergan identifies a further level of culture. It is in this level that Lonergan will situate his notion of cosmopolis.

Noting the slow development of intelligence in the human animal, Lonergan realistically observes that few of us make the spirit of inquiry the effective centre of our lives. Worse, common sense is especially prone to rationalization even as every specialisation fails to recognize the significance of other fields. This is invariably so as common sense does not reflect. For 'it is incapable of analyzing itself, incapable of making the discovery that it too is a specialized development of human knowledge, incapable of coming to grasp that its peculiar danger is to extend its legitimate concern for the concrete and the immediately practical into disregard of larger issues and indifference to long-term results.'<sup>41</sup> The upshot is a principle of decline even more radical than that of group bias. Lonergan affirms that decadent situations suffer a reversal even as those who saw off the branches on which they are sitting eventually stop sawing, and so Lonergan speaks of the 'shorter cycle' of decline that reverses group bias. The more radical nature of general bias—the term used to describe this limitation of common sense—is not so easily reversed.<sup>42</sup>

Human beings tend to live in the short term. This is unfortunate, for, to 'adapt a phrase from Marx'<sup>43</sup> we need not only to know history, but to direct it. But common sense tends to resist being subordinated to such a science and 'is unequal to the task of thinking on the level of history.' Worse, it tends to refuse the long-term insights that it needs. Lonergan relates the implications of the 'longer cycle of decline'—the social situation deteriorates, intelligence is deemed irrelevant, and the resulting social surd now becomes normative for all 'solutions' if they are to be 'practical.' Such, Lonergan believes, is the story of Western civilization.

Lonergan then begins to sketch an alternative.<sup>44</sup> The solution cannot be on the level of common sense, for its concern with the particular renders it unequal to general bias. Indeed, it must somehow make use of the very theoretical insights that Lonergan has articulated in his account of emergent probability. That is to say, with Vico, Hegel, and Marx, it must avail itself of a 'practical theory of history.'<sup>45</sup> We are in need of the 'higher viewpoint' that Lonergan is proposing!

What is the higher principle? In this early chapter, Lonergan offers a series of notes. He affirms the principle of progress which is liberty, and so rules out a bureaucratic solution. The solution must get to the roots of the principle of decline, and this is bias. Turning explicitly to social theory, Lonergan faults the methodological errors of

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<sup>41</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 251.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 250–1.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 253.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 257.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 258.

Durkheimian sociology and positivism, and urges a truly critical human science— ‘a tall order.’<sup>46</sup> Lonergan affirms that the solution must pertain to culture:

What is necessary is a cosmopolis that is neither class nor state, that stands above all their claims, that cuts them down to size, that is founded on the native detachment and disinterestedness of every intelligence, that commands man’s first allegiance, that implements itself primarily through that allegiance, that is too universal to be bribed, too impalpable to be forced, too effective to be ignored.<sup>47</sup>

Still, what is cosmopolis? Lonergan treats the question heuristically as an algebraist solving an equation by designating it as an X, a known unknown. Thus, cosmopolis is not a police force; it is concerned to make operative the timely and fruitful ideas that otherwise are inoperative; it is not a busybody; it has to protect the future against the rationalization of abuses and the creation of myths. Above all, there ‘lies the almost insoluble problem of settling clearly and exactly what the general bias is.’<sup>48</sup> Thus, a fuller solution comes to light in the final chapter in which, having argued for the existence of God, Lonergan poses the question of God’s solution to the problem of evil. *Insight*, it transpires, is a contribution to Catholic apologetics, and cosmopolis, we can easily suppose is to be identified with the Church. On the other hand, Lonergan seems to encourage a certain ambiguity with his notion of cosmopolis, an ambiguity that is suggested by the fact that, at times, (for example, in the drafts) Cosmopolis is spelt with a capital C. Lonergan, we might say, is quite content that Cosmopolis should be identified with the Catholic Church on condition that we remain open to the cosmopolis that appears to be the reality opened up by Lonergan’s social theory (which includes the discovery of emergent probability<sup>49</sup>). It seems quite evident, then, that Toynbee’s ‘challenge and response’ is especially appropriate. Cosmopolis is the social structure that emerges in the ultimate response to the ultimate challenge—God’s solution to the problem of evil. This, of course, must also be seen as a response to the challenge of general bias.

At this juncture the reader who has patiently followed this detour from theological ethics into the foundations of sociology will have appreciated better Lonergan’s contribution to the ‘almost insoluble’ problem of settling clearly and exactly just what general bias is. Hopefully, it may be clearer now that we read general bias as the sin of pride, or at any rate, a species of pride, or, we might say, a transposition of pride. It is an inordinate love of one’s own (specialized) excellence; the refusal of practicality to cooperate with a power beyond practicality. Lonergan is never this explicit, though in a Jesuit questionnaire he did speak of the ‘arrogance of omniscient common sense.’<sup>50</sup> Even *Insight’s* solitary reference to repentance (which, among other things, regrets common sense’s involvement in general bias<sup>51</sup>) contains no mention of pride. Still, in one

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 263. At times, however, cosmopolis is spelt with a capital C, for example, in the original typescript of the chapter.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 263–6.

<sup>49</sup> A fuller treatment of Lonergan’s social theory would consider the functional collaboration associated with the eight-fold specialties of *Method in Theology*. It took Lonergan twelve years to solve this equation!

<sup>50</sup> Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers: 1965-1980*, 370. Having just referred to individual and group bias, this reference is clearly now to general bias.

<sup>51</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 722.

of the nine references to repentance (and its cognates) in *Method*, we are informed of the historical effect of faith, which ‘has to meet the challenge of human decline’:

Most of all, faith has the power of undoing decline. Decline disrupts a culture with conflicting ideologies. It inflicts on individuals the social, economic, and psychological pressures that for human frailty amount to determinism. It multiplies and heaps up the abuses and absurdities that breed resentment, hatred, anger, violence. It is not propaganda and it is not argument but religious faith that will liberate human reasonableness from its ideological prisons. It is not the promises of men but religious hope that can enable men to resist the vast pressures of social decay. If passions are to quiet down, if wrongs are to be not exacerbated, not ignored, not merely palliated, but acknowledged and removed, then human possessiveness and human pride have to be replaced by religious charity, by the charity of the suffering servant, by self-sacrificing love. Men are sinners. If human progress is not to be ever distorted and destroyed by the inattention, oversights, irrationality, irresponsibility of decline, men have to be reminded of their sinfulness. They have to acknowledge their real guilt and amend their ways. They have to learn with humility that religious development is dialectical, that the task of repentance and conversion is life-long.<sup>52</sup>

General bias, then, seems connected with what Aquinas took to be the first, worse, and source of all sins. Certainly, Lonergan would never have proffered pride (or general bias) as an *explanation* for sin, since Lonergan is very clear that sin is unintelligible, as he had indicated in 1952 in his earliest reference to pride. However, in his account of general bias Lonergan may have sought to provide as much analysis as *was* possible. As we have seen, this is presented in the terms of the short-sighted, unreflective tendency of common sense to refuse assistance from without, to resist being ‘subordinated’<sup>53</sup> to the human science of directing history. Lonergan also tells us that as a principle of rationalization general bias ‘introduces the counter-positions.’<sup>54</sup> Here, it would seem, common sense is pronouncing *ultra vires*, and, as a matter of fact, Lonergan seems to have thought that his account of general bias was not simply confined to common sense.<sup>55</sup> To that extent we might say that common sense is found guilty of judging without understanding—Lonergan’s definition of arrogance.<sup>56</sup> Alternatively, general bias seems to be connected with the traditional doctrine of original sin, a concept that is mentioned immediately after Lord Russell’s observation.<sup>57</sup> In that address, *Healing and Creating in History*, Lonergan was presenting a brief statement of his analysis of ‘the dialectics of history’ (referring to Toynbee, of course) and so, once again, as per the long citation from *Method* above,

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<sup>52</sup> Lonergan, *Method*, 117.

<sup>53</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 253.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 743.

<sup>55</sup> Bias may extend into ‘things sacred.’ Lonergan, *Third Collection*, 63.

<sup>56</sup> Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-1964*, 215. Lonergan speaks of general bias as ‘impatient and even contemptuous of criticism that rests on a theoretical source.’ *Third Collection*, 62. Incidentally, insofar as it is accurate to identify the problem of specialization as a problem of pride, (an inordinate love of one’s own specialisation), then it could be said that Lonergan’s innovation regarding functional specialties in theology as a means of ongoing collaboration might be thought of as a response to the challenge of pride.

<sup>57</sup> Lonergan, *Third Collection*, 101. Note, incidentally, that the vectors of the way up and the way down are reminiscent of Babel and Pentecost.

general bias, pride, and original sin all seem to be linked to the social surd which Lonergan discusses in his contribution to sociology.

As we have seen, this theory provides the basis for a social ontology, or more exactly, an ontology of the human good. Three levels will later be distinguished, a level of particular goods, the good of order, and a third aspect, value, also referred to as ‘cultural value.’<sup>58</sup> In a highly compressed way, Lonergan claims that it is the ‘detached, disinterested, unrestricted desire to know’ that brings to light the good of order—a desire that, in the light of the inability of common sense, being ‘subject to general bias against concern with ultimate issues and ultimate results,’<sup>59</sup> also brings to light the level of value, the ‘possible object of rational choice.’<sup>60</sup> In his Latin theology classes in the 1950s and 1960s Lonergan will also, in the context of explaining the justice of God, use these levels to explain ‘the historical order of justice.’<sup>61</sup>

Explaining the interdependence of good and evil, and the way that God draws good out of evil, Lonergan will oppose these three levels of the good to three levels of evil: particular evils, evils of order, and cultural evils. Unlike the good, evil cannot be ascribed to any law of nature, but in some sense a redemptive pattern may be discerned. Particular evils are parasitic on the good, but also incite man to improve the good of order. Similarly, evils of order lead to the discovery and development of cultural values. The greatest evil, however, is cultural evil, an evil that is rooted in moral impotence and alienation from God. Lonergan then repeats the traditional doctrine: ‘all evils spring from pride and alienation from Him.’<sup>62</sup>

## PRIDE AND REDEMPTION

In 1958 Lonergan gave a lecture on the redemption in Montreal, having just finished teaching the theology of the redemption as part of his course ‘*De Verbo Incarnato*’ at the Gregorian University for the third time.<sup>63</sup> Lonergan begins by noting how impossible it is to cover such a vast topic in a single lecture, but he gives the impression of attempting to provide something that approximates to a unified view.<sup>64</sup> On the other hand, it does not appear perfectly clear as to just what that view is, or how it provides a unity. Perhaps we may make progress on this point.

In a first section, then, Lonergan gives a bibliography, singling out Jean Rivière (‘who devoted his life to the question of the redemption’) and an ‘outstanding figure,’ Stanislaus Lyonnet.<sup>65</sup> A second section, ‘Redemption as Communication,’ draws attention to the manner in which ‘heart speaks to heart’—we ‘express ourselves, we communicate,

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<sup>58</sup> See Lonergan, *Supplement to the Incarnate Word*, article 2.

<sup>59</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 620.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 624.

<sup>61</sup> Lonergan, *Supplement to the Incarnate Word*, article 10.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, article 10.

<sup>63</sup> Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-1964*, 3–28. Lonergan’s course on the Incarnate Word is scheduled to be published towards the end of 2015, in Vol. 8 of the Collected Works of Lonergan. It will not contain the *Supplement*, which is due to be published in Vol. 9 on the Redemption.

<sup>64</sup> Here see the editors comment, *Ibid.*, 14 n.26.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

through the flesh, through words and gestures ... the incarnation and the redemption are the supreme instances of God communicating to us in this life.’<sup>66</sup> For this reason each must attempt to draw from it his or her own fruit. Still, this does not preclude the work of a theologian, who works towards a more total view, and so, a third section seeks an act of understanding into ‘The intelligibility of the redemption.’<sup>67</sup>

Lonergan, then, seeks an insight into this ‘particularly complex’ mystery that concerns matters such as suffering, death, sin, forgiveness and law, ‘things that profoundly trouble the mind of man.’<sup>68</sup> Lonergan then makes five points. First, the redemption, though it is intelligible, must not be regarded as a necessity—St Augustine ‘flatly stated that there were many other ways in which God could redeem man.’<sup>69</sup> Second, Lonergan states that this intelligibility is dynamic. Lonergan then explains that this is a matter of dialectical thought, concerned with opposites such as death and sin. ‘There is in the death and resurrection of Christ a fundamental intelligibility that is not something like a deductive process but rather like a dialectical process.’<sup>70</sup> Third, Lonergan introduces a point that can solve ‘not a few of the many difficulties that can be raised in connection with the notion of satisfaction.’<sup>71</sup> Here Lonergan highlights *Summa contra gentiles* 3, c. 158. In discussing how we are freed from sin, Aquinas considers the vehemence with which we must hate it, and goes on to note that ‘what we can do through our friends we somehow do ourselves’—applying this to the way that when our friend suffers, we do. Fourth, the intelligibility is complex—it includes the surd of sin. Fifth, the intelligibility is multiple: it cannot be put into a single formula but one that exhibits many aspects.<sup>72</sup>

Lonergan then runs through five aspects treated by Aquinas, explaining that he wishes to ask the question of how the many aspects can be brought into a single view. In this penultimate section, ‘Aspects of the redemption,’<sup>73</sup> Lonergan again treats five topics, sacrifice, redemption, vicarious satisfaction, merit, and efficiency.

In Lonergan’s final section, ‘Redemption as a Mystery,’<sup>74</sup> Lonergan tries to suggest ‘how one moves towards a total view.’ In five pages he offers the category of *mystery* as fundamental. Lonergan explains that in this context he is not referring to a theological truth that we do not understand in this life, or a theme for pious meditation (as in the mysteries of the rosary) but as ‘the secret counsel of God, the plan of God.’<sup>75</sup> Thus, St Mark speaks of the mysteries of the kingdom, (Mark 4:11-12) and St Paul speaks of ‘a gospel which reveals the mystery, hidden from us through countless ages, but now made plain ...’ (Rom.16: 25-26). Lonergan draws on recent scholarship that would understand mystery

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 8–14.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 14–24.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 24–28.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

as a secret counsel of a king, the incredibly complex wisdom of God (Eph. 3:10).<sup>76</sup> Thus, after his baptism, Jesus announces that the time is fulfilled, and that the kingdom of God is at hand.

Interestingly, (in the light of the previous discussion regarding the origins of social structures) Lonergan explains that this theme of the kingdom of God ‘goes back to what lies at the origins, perhaps, of Jewish messianic expectation.’<sup>77</sup> Kings had been introduced under Samuel in preference to theocracy and as a consequence there opened up the notion of a Messiah.<sup>78</sup> We are to understand Jesus’ preaching of the kingdom (or alternatively, the body of Christ) in this context:

The structure of this mystery, whether spoken of as the kingdom, the inauguration of the kingdom, the body of Christ, or the foundation of the church, is set forth in the New Testament in terms of antitheses.<sup>79</sup>

Lonergan elaborates on these antitheses in the Pauline epistles and the New Testament, in particular, the Sermon on the Mount in which we are admonished to love our enemies and turn the other cheek. Lonergan’s final citation is an illustration of the dialectic between pride and humility from Matthew 20: 24-8. The mother of the sons of Zebedee requests that James and John sit at the right and left hand when Jesus comes into his kingdom. This annoys the others, but in response to his disciples’ indignation, Jesus urges that ‘whoever has a mind to be first among you must be your slave.’ With this, and some similar verses, Lonergan opines that in such a passage and many others we have ‘the clue to the intelligibility of the redemption. It is the victory of suffering, of accepting the consequences of sin, the evils of this world, in the spirit that animated Christ. It is the transformation of the world that arises when evil is transformed into good by the Christian spirit.’<sup>80</sup>

By way of commentary on this lecture, I would suggest that our foregoing discussion can provide a lens. I have read Lonergan as contributing to social theory by engaging with the question of the origin of social structures. Following Toynbee, Lonergan takes up the category of challenge and response and writes it large. The ultimate challenge of evil, that ‘troubles the mind’ so much, is to find its response in a social structure of divine origins. Thus Lonergan speaks of ‘the kingdom, *the inauguration of the kingdom*, the body of Christ, or *the foundation of the church*,’ (italics added to emphasize origins)—and this structure is dialectical—it is set forth ‘in terms of antitheses.’ Lonergan, then, sees redemption in terms of the way the solution to an ultimate and intractable problem gradually dawns

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<sup>76</sup> Lonergan refers to Ernst Vogt, ‘*Mysteria in textibus Qumran*’ *Biblica* 37 (1956) 247–57; Karl Prümm, ‘Zur Phänomenologie des paulinischen Mysterion und dessen seelischer Aufnahm. Ein Übersicht,’ *Biblica* 37 (1956) 135–61; Karl Prümm, ‘*Mystères*,’ in *Supplément au dictionnaire de bible*, ed. L. Pirot, A. Robert, and Henri Cazelles (Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ané, 1960) cols. 1–226.

<sup>77</sup> Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-1964*, 25.

<sup>78</sup> Lonergan quotes without citation 1 Samuel 8:7 (‘It is not you they are rejecting, it is I’) and, regarding the notion of the Messiah, may have had in mind 2 Samuel 7 12:13 (‘When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever’).

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

within society. This involves untying the tangled knots of pride,<sup>81</sup> but it is not so much the precept, but the example of humility that provides the remedy.

## CONCLUSION

In this article I have explored one facet of Lonergan's Christian humanism so ably presented by McCarthy, in particular, I have explored a lacuna in Lonergan: he hardly ever mentions pride. This represents a less confrontational approach than that adopted by the Augustinian tradition. In order to illustrate the point I drew a parallel with Aquinas who delicately tries to do justice both to philosophical notions of evil (vice is akin to illness) and theological notions of sin as an offence against God. I have suggested that Lonergan, too, softened this dialectic. Indeed, so delicate and indirect is Lonergan's rhetoric that his point is easily missed. In order to spell out what Lonergan was up to I turned to his understanding of the foundations of that quintessentially modern science, sociology. I noted the affinity with Smith's account of the origins of social structures as the eruption from the clash of human limitation and human transcendence. I compared this with the way that Lonergan had drawn on the notion of 'challenge and response' to explain social order (technology-economy-polity). After all, were we not limited we would not be challenged; and were we not capable of transcendence we would not be able to respond. In his account (which Lonergan situates within the dialectics of history) he identified the principle of social decline as bias (individual and group) and radically deepened his analysis by introducing the mysterious (but slightly bland) term 'general bias.' I have argued that this may be seen as a transposition of traditional Christian teaching on pride—general bias is the arrogant insubordination of common sense. Like Aquinas, Lonergan does not demur from the traditional understanding of pride as the worst, first, and source of all sins. Nevertheless, his respect for human intelligence, and more generally, human excellence, encourages Lonergan to understand the phenomenon as much as possible. Insofar as my reading is sound we may say that Lonergan has provided a new insight into pride as the arrogant, impatient, and contemptuous refusal of practical people to heed the solution that theology offers: it may indeed be seen in terms of value blindness (to use von Hildebrand's phrase).

The redemption is a response to the challenge of pride, and in its historical dialectic Lonergan suggests that the category of *mystery* provides a unified view, where this term refers to the outworking of the secret counsel of a king. It is the mystery of the genesis of the cultivation of humility that, according to the (humblest) parable of the growing seed (Mark 4: 26–9), sprouts and grows: who knows how? Lonergan notes the nature of the communicative action proper to this cultivation. Humility is exalted, certainly, but by example rather than precept. This is the appropriate response to those who challenge the greatness of God. Perhaps, then, Lonergan's silence on pride was unsurprising. Nevertheless, it seems considered. After introducing his 'dialectics of history' for the first time in an address on 'The role of a Catholic university in the modern world' he explained:

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<sup>81</sup> In the encyclical letter *Laudato Si'*, in a section on 'The Mystery of the Universe,' (paragraphs 76–83 at 80), Pope Francis speaks of God as bringing good from the evil we have done, and cites John Paul II, *Catechesis* (24 April 1991), 6: *Insegnamenti* 14 (1991), 856: 'The Holy Spirit can be said to possess an infinite creativity, proper to the divine mind, which knows how to loosen the knots of human affairs, including the most complex and inscrutable.'

The purifier must be pure, for purification itself is a human change and so is subject to ambiguity; one cannot remove the mote in another's eye when there is a beam in one's own; the true intellectual has to be humble, serene, detached, without personal or corporate or national complacency, without appeals to contemporary, let alone archaist, bias or passion or fads.<sup>82</sup>

By his quiet (and magnanimous) example of Christian humanism, Lonergan practiced what he preached.

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<sup>82</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *Collection: Papers by Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988) 113. In his talk Lonergan introduced Cosmopolis, and goes on to underline the importance of the social sciences. For an alternative perspective that does *not* attenuate the dialectic, see John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006).