

The Symbol-Laden Book of Experience: Juan Carlos Scannone, SJ and Emmanuel Levinas

When considered from the standpoint of prospection as a work of discovery and practical direction, philosophy begins and only begins when, instead of limiting itself either to the global intuition which originally suffices for the spontaneous action, or to the particular plans which mask but don't suppress the general inclination of the will, it understands and practices its duty of spelling out, letter by letter, the book of life written in us, of separating its governing ideas, of reaching, of assimilating its composite realities, of foreseeing and preparing their unfolding.<sup>1</sup>

1. Transgressive Symbols in Pope Francis's Trips to Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia

The Pope's trip to the United States presented us with both words and deeds laden with symbolism. The address to the U.S. Congress [Slide #1] was noteworthy for its being non-partisan in its symbolism, for it provoked applause from both sides the aisle. In fact, it introduced new ways for thinking about identity in the United States of America and about our politics. He started boldly by recalling the figure of Moses, a Bergoglian cipher for non-voluntaristic but still vertical transcendence:

Yours is a work which makes me reflect in two ways on the figure of Moses. On the one hand, the patriarch and lawgiver of the people of Israel symbolizes the need of peoples to keep alive their sense of unity by means of just legislation. On the other, the figure of Moses leads us directly to God and thus to the transcendent dignity of the human being. Moses provides us with a good synthesis of your work: you are asked to protect, by means of the law, the image and likeness fashioned by God on every human face.<sup>2</sup>

The talk to Congress focussed on witnesses in U.S. society and culture. At its core the Pope wove a story about four witnesses to Christian mission and discipleship from this country. The configuration of these four, he suggested, offers a new way to re-think the witness of Catholicism in this country:

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<sup>1</sup> Maurice Blondel, "The Starting Point of Philosophical Research," in *The Idealist Illusion and Other Essays* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000), 130.

<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis's Address to the U.S. Congress on September 24, 2015, available on-line at [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/september/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150924\\_usa-us-congress.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/september/documents/papa-francesco_20150924_usa-us-congress.html).

Three sons and a daughter of this land, four individuals and four dreams: Lincoln, liberty; Martin Luther King, liberty in plurality and non-exclusion; Dorothy Day, social justice and the rights of persons; and Thomas Merton, the capacity for dialogue and openness to God. Four representatives of the American people.<sup>3</sup>

As a configuration of the will of the people, only the first two would normally be considered as “political.” In fact, the Argentine Pope is expanding the definition of the political by including the radical Catholicism of Day and the monastic call for world peace of Merton. Lincoln’s liberty and King’s non-exclusion no longer appear like the partisan agendas to which we are often accustomed in our political discourse. Instead there is the suggestion here of how the Catholic vision for national politics can be augmented and transformed as part of an overall plan of missionary discipleship.

The events in Philadelphia’s Independence Mall were equally stimulating. [Slide #2, Pope at Independence Mall.] Here we saw the theology of gestures for which Pope Francis has become famous. He spoke on the steps of the Constitutional Convention about religious freedom using the same lectern that Abraham Lincoln used when he delivered the Gettysburg Address. He wanted to draw upon the historical memory of the people of this land using their own symbols. [Slide#3.]

His words were in Spanish, and they concerned the pressing issue of not allowing the federal government to violate the conscience of religious believers. [Slide#4, on religious freedom] He defined religious freedom in terms of concern for the Other. What struck me as quite brilliant was the linking of the theme of freedom with the *pueblo en marcha*, the people on the move [Slide #5]. At the end of the talk, he noted that the inclusion of Latino Catholicism into the matrix of U.S. culture is the final goal of exercising freedom. In other words, the Constitution that was signed in the very building behind the Pope protects and upholds the cultural and religious values of the Hispanic

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

people of God together with the rights and responsibilities of all peoples in the United States. It is fitting that the Argentine Pope also blesses the cross of the next Encuentro of Hispanic/Latino Ministry at the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia [Slide#6, blessing of the Encuentro cross]. The Fifth Encuentro will take place in Grapevine, TX on September 20-23, 2018, and with this gesture the Pope signaled his fervent hope that this meeting will augment the integration and vitality of the Hispanic presence in the U.S. Catholic Church.

## 2. Juan Carlos Scannone's Symbolic Book of Experience<sup>4</sup>

We turn now to the thought of Juan Carlos Scannone. Scannone's philosophy of the symbol is linked to the symbolic action of Pope Francis in many ways. Scannone, a Jesuit philosopher in Argentina now in his 80s, explains the circumstances of their original meeting sixty years ago:

I have known Pope Francis since he was a seminarian of the Archdiocese of Buenos Aires, I believe since 1957, before he entered the Jesuit novitiate. I was then his professor of Greek and Literature, because Jorge Mario already had his Bachelor's degree, but he had to spend two years in the Minor Seminary to study Latin, forming part of the "Latinists," young men who had already finished secondary school but had not studied Classic Humanities. Later, on my return from studying in Europe, in 1967, I met him again as a student of Theology at the Faculty of Theology. We were living in the same religious House, the Colegio Maximo de San Jose. When I was Novice Master, although he lived in another House, I gave him spiritual direction. Later, we lived in the same Colegio Maximo, for most of his six years as Provincial (1973-1979) and his six additional years as Rector both of the said Colegio as well as of the Faculties of Philosophy and Theology of San Miguel (1979-1985). He was professor of Pastoral Theology at the Faculty of Theology, and I was professor of Philosophical Theology at the Faculty of Philosophy. We had a daily and very cordial relation.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The focus here on "the book of experience" is derived from the work of *ressourcement* of Emmanuel Falque, *Le livre d'expérience. D'Anselme de Cantorbéry à Bernard de Clairvaux* (Paris: Du Cerf, 2017). Scannone accomplishes a Latin American retrieval of the book of experience in his work.

<sup>5</sup> "Retired Teacher Remembers Young Bergoglio," *Zenit*, April 25, 2013, available on-line at <https://zenit.org/articles/retired-teacher-remembers-young-jorge-bergoglio/>.

Later I will speak about the convergences between Scannone's philosophy of "we" and the theology of the people of Pope Francis. For the moment, let us take this anecdote as sufficient for linking the two Argentine thinkers as frequent collaborators in the Latin American Church.

Both thinkers are very concerned about the role of the Latin American Church in articulating a just vision of society. Scannone considers the vision of the gospel that will transform society to be of a wider domain than just the social teaching of the Church.<sup>6</sup> The documents of the magisterium that are classified as the Catholic Social Teaching are included in this vision, but a method of "see, judge, and act," such as was developed at the beginning of the theology of liberation, is just as important. In what follows, we will articulate the book of experience according to Juan Carlos Scannone following this tripartite scheme.<sup>7</sup> But it is also important to note that he agrees with Lucio Gera, the father of the Argentine school of theology, that the human sciences and historical hermeneutics are just as important in the method of liberation theology as the mediation of the social sciences. So it is not unusual for Scannone's method of liberation theology to include the analysis of symbols using a non-empirical method not drawn from the social sciences. As we shall see, the ethical philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas plays an important role within this humanistic mediation of the social interpretation of reality.<sup>8</sup> In what follows, we will lay out an amplified version of Scannone's approach to the method of "see, judge, and act," paying particular attention to how he draws upon a Latin

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<sup>6</sup> Juan Carlos Scannone, "La transformación de la realidad social de acuerdo con el evangelio," in: *Dar razón de nuestra esperanza*, ed. Cecilia Avenatti da Palumbo y Jorge Scampini (Buenos Aires: Agape, 2012), 85-88.

<sup>7</sup> Carlos María Galli finds a connection between Scannone's interpretation of "see, judge, and act" and the Ignatian exercises. See *Filosofía y teología en diálogo desde América Latina. Homenaje a Juan Carlos Scannone sj en su 80 cumpleaños* [hereafter=Festschrift], ed. José María Cantó, sj and Pablo Figueroa, sj (Córdoba: Editorial de la Universidad Católica de Córdoba, 2013), 129-37.

<sup>8</sup> In 1971 Enrique Dussell integrated Scannone into a working group that was developing the foundations of a philosophy of liberation. Scannone reports that he went to that meeting in Córdoba in agreement with Dussell about the need to follow their mutual *inspiración levinasiana, pero en clave latinoamericana*. This meant pursuing a non-dialectical philosophy of alterity that saw the face of the Other in the faces of the poor in Latin America. See *Festschrift*, 24.

American reading of the book of experience for the sake of articulating a vision of the Gospel that can transform society.

#### A. Envisioning the Dwelling of the Infinite on the Latin American Continent

Scannone faults Kant for reducing the transcendentals of the true, the good, and the beautiful to regulative ideas of experience but admits that the Kantian Copernican revolution has its place in analyzing the experience of Latin Americans in the modern world. Kant *de facto* reduces the phenomena of experience to that of matter by not allowing for a full account of the interpretation of their place in experience.<sup>9</sup> He places more value in Hegel's dialectic but does not consider the Hegelian notion of an absolute science to be a legitimate goal. Instead he examines the Hegelian dialectic in two ways. First, he follows twentieth century interpreters of Hegel in Germany like Rüdiger Bubner who study the hermeneutical implications of Hegel's dialectic.<sup>10</sup> Second, since 1971 Scannone shared with Enrique Dussel an appreciation of the work of the Freiburg philosopher Bernard Lakebrink that introduced the Thomistically inspired notion of a Hegelian "analectic."<sup>11</sup> The analectic that was forged collaboratively by the two Latin American philosophers of liberation was an open dialectic that did not separate itself from the tradition of the analogy of being. But Scannone was also unwilling to approach the traditional language of metaphysics naively. Here too the Levinasian overcoming of Hegelian and

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<sup>9</sup> RNP, 47.

<sup>10</sup> RNP, 47.

<sup>11</sup> Juan Carlos Scannone, "Metafísica y religión," en Juan Carlos Scannone, sj, *Religión y nuevo pensamiento. Hacia una filosofía de la religión para nuestro tiempo desde América Latina* (Iztapalapa, Anthropos), 76. Hereafter this will be abbreviated as RNP. Lakebrink himself adopted the term from Hans Hof's *Scintilla animae. Eine Studie zu einem Grundbegriff in Meister Eckharts Philosophie mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Verhältnisses der Eckhartschen Philosophie zur neuplatonischen und thomistischen Anschauung* (Lund/Bonn: 1952), 154. He then developed the term in his own way in Bernard Lakebrink, *Hegels dialektische Ontologie und die thomistische Analektik* (Köln: 1955). See the commentary on this in Mauricio Beuchot, "The Limits of Cultural Relativism," in Marcelo Dascal and in Roberto Goizueta's dissertation on Lonergan and Dussel. On the relationship to the analectic to theology of the people in general and its role in differentiating the philosophy of liberation in Argentina from modern philosophy in general, see Emilce Cuda, *Para Leer A Francisco. Teología, Ética, y Política* (Buenos Aires: Manantial, 2016), 165.

Heideggerian philosophy is also evident. In fact, we can claim that the negative element in Scannone's critique of the Thomistic metaphysical tradition is inspired more by Blondel and Levinas (and therefore comes very close to the anti-metaphysical thought of Jean-Luc Marion) than by Hegel, Heidegger, or Ricoeur even though he comments extensively on all of these figures throughout his extensive corpus.

Let me illustrate this claim about the affinity between Blondel and Levinas in Scannone's work with three points about Scannone's understanding of the relationship of God and experience: 1.) the Latin American experience of being as *el estar*, 2.) God's dwelling on the earth, and 3.) divine transcendence in the immanence of human action.

In Spanish, one can distinguish between a concept of being that is general and non-determinate, *ser*, and one that is always determined by a particular time and a place, *estar*. *¿De dónde eres?* Where are you from, speaking in the most general of terms about your place of origin (an example of *ser*). *¿Cómo estás?* How are you doing at this very moment and in this very place (an example of *estar*)? Scannone and other Latin American philosophers exploit this linguistic difference in order to locate the presence of the divine on the Latin American continent. Scannone is very influenced on this question by the anthropologist Rodolfo Kusch (1922-1979) and the living philosopher Carlos Cullen, both from the University of Buenos Aires. Rodolfo Kusch, above all in *América Profunda*, had studied the role of the indigenous traditions and their rootedness in the earth and the sacred traditions of the earth (*Pacha Mama*). Cullen then applied this anthropological insight to the linguistic distinction between *ser* and *estar*.<sup>12</sup> *Nosotros estamos en la tierra*, "we are on the earth," therefore becomes a form of autochthonous metaphysics that is distinctively Latin American. There is no general category of being (*ser*) that hovers above either the creator-creature distinction or above the Heideggerian

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. RNP, 125-9.

fourfold (earth, sky, mortals, divinities). Traditional metaphysics and the Heideggerian critique of onto-theology are both surpassed by the newly formulated autochthony of *estar*. The Latin American experience of being is such that we are on the earth in the here and now of experiencing vertical transcendence in the midst of our daily realities. There are noteworthy affinities between the autochthony and cultural rootedness of *el estar*, on the one hand, and the Levinasian notion of a trace of the divine passing through our historical memory and made visible in the face of the other. But Scannone also claims that Cullen in particular surpasses the Talmudic agnosticism of Levinas by radically affirming the presence of the absolute Other in the abode in which male and female live together on the earth:

The vertical Infinite inhabits or experience ethically and religiously by transcending it, that is to say, escaping it while at the same time grounding it. It [the Infinite] is (*está*) in and beyond our experience.<sup>13</sup>

The difference lies in the particular construal of the creating of a dwelling place by a man and a woman for the sake of working the land and contributing to the creation of a new society.

We turn now to Scannone's interpreting of our dwelling on the earth.<sup>14</sup> Following *Totalité et Infini*, Scannone underscores the dual meaning of "in-finite." We experience the radical difference between infinite and finite. We also privilege the experience of the infinite as an experience that takes place *within* our finitude. In this sense, Scannone can affirm Levinas's insight that the experience of the Infinite is the paradigm for all experience of difference.<sup>15</sup> Difference is highlighted by the experience of the In-finite.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> "¿Habita Dios entre los Hombres?" in RNP, 258.

<sup>14</sup> RNP 56-58, 255-8, See also *Antropología trinitaria*.

<sup>15</sup> RNP, 56.

<sup>16</sup> There are many parallels here to the semiotics of culture of Alejandro García-Rivera, particularly his *St. Martín de Porres: The "Little Stories" and the Semiotics of Culture* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1995).

Scannone is particularly drawn to the religious ethics of *Otherwise than Being* even though he places his own Catholic accents on the French thinker's daring reformulations of philosophy.<sup>17</sup> Whereas Levinas replaces first philosophy with ethics in a move to forget all metaphysics, Scannone foregrounds the pragmatic-ethical articulation of an analectical construal of reality. Accordingly, we do not know God as a being among beings or as the result of a dialectical unfolding of the Absolute in history. God passes before us in the face of the other. Whereas Martin Buber chose the "you" as the prime revelation of God, Levinas and Scannone prioritize God's commanding presence as illeity, an external embodiment of the self that is encountered when, for example, we place ourselves in solidarity with the poor and marginalized. The trace of divine illeity, Scannone says in accord with *Otherwise than Being*, corresponds to the glory of God's holiness.<sup>18</sup> The ethical summons, "Here I am, Lord" is the way that we encounter this trace. The Latin American philosophy of liberation discovered by Dussel and Scannone is with this Levinasian summons reconfigured analectically, i.e., beyond the false Hegelian pretenses of totalizing closure and the primacy of Absolute philosophy over ethics.<sup>19</sup>

Scannone also combines the Levinasian orientation to ethical existence with the Latin American metaphysics of *estar*.<sup>20</sup> We exist ethically in relationship to our physical and social environment. We are not born into the world but as Cartesian thinking egos but as communal laborers, spouses, and parents. The surprising openness to an eschatological horizon in the finite activity of work is another philosophical path that links Scannone and Levinas.<sup>21</sup> Whereas Heidegger posed the question of whether and how the human person dwells poetically upon the earth in a manner that seemed morally neutral, Scannone's phenomenology of the everyday

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<sup>17</sup> RNP, 56-8.

<sup>18</sup> RNP, 58.

<sup>19</sup> See Michael Barber, *Ethical Hermeneutics: Rationality in Enrique Dussel's Philosophy of Liberation* (New York: Fordham, 1999).

<sup>20</sup> RNP, 255-8.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Silvia Benso, "Gestures of Work: Levinas and Hegel," *Continental Philosophy Review* 40,3 (July 2007): 307–330.



takes a decidedly ethical turn. He posits with our dwelling “an originary donation of space and time that convokes to each one of us and to each human community (the distinct ‘we’s’) a ‘Here I am’ and ‘a localized and temporalized existence on the earth (*estar-siendo en la tierra*).”<sup>22</sup> This is not in any way a denial of God’s omnipresence nor immensity. On the contrary, through the filter of this ethical-religious hermeneutic, one can still make such affirmations. God appears omnipresent and immense by virtue of God’s passing as a trace through the communities that have been built upon the land. The God who passes in glory obliges the inhabitants of this earth to remain in solidarity with the marginalized of our land and even with the land itself.<sup>23</sup>

Scannone’s thought is a hermeneutical philosophy of action, which he sometimes calls, in the idiom of Karl-Otto Apel, a pragmatic theory of communicative reason.<sup>24</sup> Scannone hence does not interpret the revelation of transcendence in the first instance in the field of being or in that of any other abstract ideal, ideational or interpretative process, or dialectical unfolding. In this sense, his general approach to transcendence is very close to that of both the mature Levinas and the early, counter-Thomistic Jean-Luc Marion. Both Levinas and Marion figure prominently in his attempt to recover a genuine sense of phenomenology for the social crisis in Latin America today.

The real genesis of his thoughts on this issue, however, does not begin with either of these French thinkers. Since the time of his dissertation on the theme of “Being and Incarnation” in the early work of Blondel, Scannone has focused principally on the epiphany of divine transcendence in the immanence of human action.<sup>25</sup> Scannone highlights Blondel’s teaching

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<sup>22</sup> RNP, 268.

<sup>23</sup> See my “Uninhabitable Land, Landless Peoples,” *Church Life* (August 29, 2016), accessed on-line at <https://churchlife.nd.edu/2016/08/29/uninhabitable-land-landless-peoples/> on November 25, 2017.

<sup>24</sup> “La transformación de la realidad social de acuerdo con el evangelio,” *Dar razón*, 88.

<sup>25</sup> Juan Carlos Scannone, *Sein und Inkarnation: Zum ontologischen Hintergrund der Frühschriften Maurice Blondels* (Munich: Alber, 1968).

that the human agent is a self-surpassing being.<sup>26</sup> Blondelian *dépassement* for Scannone is the cipher that reveals within the expressivity of action how religious symbols move from a worldly semantics of univocal signification to one that highlights radically analogically transcendence.<sup>27</sup> Self-surpassing also applies to our existence on the earth and therefore shows how his emphasis on autochthony is never reducible to pantheism. We engage the earth as responsible custodians of our common home, not in order to eliminate a distinction between personal action and terrestrial forces.<sup>28</sup>

The basic elements of this reading of Blondel are already present in the dissertation, which he completed in Freiburg in 1967 with the assistance of his director, the Heidegger student Max Müller (later dismissed by Heidegger for his anti-Nazism), the Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner, and his life-long colleague Lourencinho Bruno Puntel.<sup>29</sup> The theme of alterity is already woven into the dissertation even though it is not treated as a discrete section of the work.<sup>30</sup> First, Scannone highlights not only the perichoresis of divine transcendence with human action, but he places a special emphasis on the logic of privation (*steresis*), especially as developed in Blondel's 1903 essay, *Principe élémentaire de la logique de la vie morale*.<sup>31</sup> From there, he explicates the experience of participation in Blondel as a philosophical unity of opposites (*henosis enantion*) found only in the Gospel.<sup>32</sup> If Blondel tends towards a Neoplatonic ascent through finite human action to the gift of divine love (as Henry Duméry hinted already in

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<sup>26</sup> RNP, 30.

<sup>27</sup> It is noteworthy that *dépassement* is a Blondelian term that assimilates to the hermeneutical notion of transgression, according to Jean Ladrière. Cf. RNP, 205.

<sup>28</sup> See RNP, 65, on the "the truth of paganism."

<sup>29</sup> See Festschrift, 281-312 for Puntel's fascinating homage to Scannone, paying special attention to the affinities between Scannone and Lonergan, a topic into which we cannot enter here.

<sup>30</sup> Scannone's reading also attends to the dynamics and nature and grace in Blondel's post-Idealist ontology of finite spirit (*Sein und Inkarnation*, 37-9, 91-4, 110-32) and therefore stands close to the later work of Emmanuel Gabellieri on the ontology of the gift in Simone Weil, *Être et Don: Simone Weil et la philosophie* (Louvain: Peeters, 2003).

<sup>31</sup> Maurice Blondel, "Principe élémentaire de la logique de la vie morale," Bibliothèque du Congrès International de Philosophie. Volume 2, 1903. *Morale Générale: La philosophie de la Paix*, Les Sociétés d'Enseignement Populaire. Pages 51-85. The ET is found in *The Idealist Illusion*.

<sup>32</sup> *Sein und Inkarnation*, 207.

1952 in his Blondelian inspired henology), Scannone seems to suggest, then this analogical movement of the human spirit presupposes an even more radical sense of alterity.

Scannone concludes his study with a deft reading of the controversial last chapter of *L'Action* (1893) and shows that “the triunity of being, truth, and action” come to the fore only when the mediation of being is seen through the discernment of discrete acts in their individuated appearance as living letters of the alphabet.<sup>33</sup> The concrete incarnation of the relationship between being and beings and between the communion of divine love and its immanence in human freedom hinges on the self-expression of the infinite ground of being and love in its acceptance and living out in the discrete spelling out of human action. “Between truth and being, reigns a founding identity and a founding heterogeneity,” writes Blondel.<sup>34</sup> This radical unity together with the equally radical difference is the point of departure in the domain of free human action for Scannone’s later reflections the necessity of thinking analogically about alterity as a new method for a philosophy of liberation.<sup>35</sup>

#### B. Judging the Power of Symbols and their Analogical Transgression of Reality

Pope Francis invoked foundational symbols like Moses, Dr. King, Abraham Lincoln, and others to provoke a transformation of social and political reality in the United States in the light of the Gospel. This interpellation is completely in accord with the use of symbolic action in the Argentine theology of the people. These are the same kinds of provocations that Jorge Mario Bergoglio invoked when he gave the *Te Deum* and Feast of St. Cajetan homilies as the Archbishop of Buenos Aires.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 237. See also the epitaph above on Blondel’s fascinating approach to the book of experience.

<sup>34</sup> German edition of *L'Action* (1893), 429. **Need to find the ET.**

<sup>35</sup> RNP, 206.

<sup>36</sup> See Thomas R. Rourke, *The Roots of Pope Francis’s Social and Political Thought. From Argentina to the Vatican* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), xxx.

What are the philosophical presuppositions of this Argentine theology that Juan Carlos Scannone himself provided? In fact, there is a treasure of philosophical thought on the transgressive symbol in the work of Juan Carlos Scannone.<sup>37</sup> He links the phenomenon of the symbol to a semantic (and hermeneutical) account of the analogy of being and to Jean Ladrière's notion of transgression. Hermeneutical theory, especially that of Ricoeur, questioned the restrictions placed on religious language that made reference to transcendence by Kant. Ricoeur himself admitted of practical applications of the language of transcendence but also investigated the meaning of the classical analogical language within a theory of interpretation. It is at this point in Ricoeur's study of the limits of theological language that Scannone engages the debate. All signification comes from beyond the realm of signification, for even Thomas distinguished between the *res significata* ("that which is signified" by a term in religious language) and its *modus significandi* ("mode of signification"). Only in God, for example, can one posit the wisdom that is in, alongside, and beyond (*en, a través, y más allá de*) the negation of our limited of thinking and speaking about wisdom.<sup>38</sup> For only in God can one have a point of reference that is, by an analogical mode of thinking, both the affirmation and negation of that reality at once. In essence, Scannone is using hermeneutical theory to rethink the Thomistic doctrine of "terms of perfection."<sup>39</sup> Hermeneutics allows the theologian to reflect carefully on the usage of language as an experience of human limitedness but not to change the realities signified by the terms into new or different realities that did not previously exist. In this sense, the analysis of a doctrine of analogy is a thoroughly practical and pastoral one in a semantic key. It is a removal of a reference to a fundamental reality of Christian faith any more than the

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<sup>37</sup> See, for example, RNP 35-76, 114-5, 187-224, esp. 197-8. Illuminating in this regard is the commentary by Fresia in *Festschrift*, 63-69.

<sup>38</sup> RNP, 203.

<sup>39</sup> RNP, 201-202. For a similar approach to the Thomistic doctrine of perfections without the hermeneutical theory, see Gregory Rocca, *Speaking the Incomprehensible God* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008).

*remotio* of perfectible terms already functions in the thought of St. Thomas as living theological practice.

Paradoxically, the hermeneutical attention to the limits of human language, creates a discursive space to consider theological language as a semantic “movement” and as a “rhythm” that includes affirmation, negation, and the way of eminence. The former term is derived from Ladrière, and the latter is taken from St. Thomas but with reference to the concept of rhythm in the *Analogia Entis* of Erich Przywara, S.J.<sup>40</sup> In this sense, the semantic category of transgression works with and against the rhythms of everyday life and ordinary theological usage with movement that is simultaneously horizontal and vertical. In the abyss of divine perfection, there is no way to locate a movement from better to worse signification when one is using metaphorical and symbolic language in an analogical manner. The movement in question is neither the physical or verbal movement of the one who enunciates discourse about God nor that of a movement of language such that the speaker can become closer to the perfection that is intended by the act of signification. So what, then, is moving? It is a movement of the human spirit. In the symbolic manifestation, an event is traced through our lives. On the pragmatic level a symbol has been created in either thought, discourse, or action. In the semantic field, Ladrière highlights that there is a movement between the literal and the non-literal sense of the term and makes this distinction the key to his notion of transgression. Theological language intends to move beyond and transgress the boundaries of the literal when it includes symbolic meanings. This movement is self-implicating in terms of our experience of a radically transcendent and liberating God. This movement is the writing of the book of experience within us.<sup>41</sup> But this movement between two senses that are not reducible to one another has to be considered in conjunction with the triple rhythm of affirmation, negation, and the way of eminence that

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<sup>40</sup> RNP, 199-200, 202-208.

<sup>41</sup> See the epitaph from Blondel at the beginning of this essay.

conditions all theological discourse. As a theologian who practices hermeneutics, Scannone will claim that we are bound to language to express our thoughts. But the limits of that boundedness remain in tension with the multiple movements that our discourse displays when it is employed theologically. Consequently, the basic movement of transgression is one that avoids idolatry, i.e., mistaking our human constructs of thought and language for the immensity and glory of a God who can be traced in the faces of the poor. Analogical usage and idolatrous usage are fundamentally opposed.<sup>42</sup> The policing of the boundary lines between analogy and idolatry becomes then the point of intersection of Scannone's theology of the symbol with the prophetic, Biblical language of, for example, Gustavo Gutiérrez's theology of liberation.

"Analogical discourse in its total integrity (*en su conjunto*) acts as a symbol,"<sup>43</sup> writes Scannone. Without getting into the Thomistic issue of the mutuality of metaphor and analogy in the strict sense of these terms (a point not lost on Scannone), suffice it to say that Scannone is using the word "symbol" to apply to the total and radical effect of all analogical discourse in speaking about God while gazing at the face of the poor and marginalized. Symbol is not just an isolated creation in words, works of art, or performative gestures. Symbol is personal and social, innerworldly and radically transcendent. Cuda explains:

The symbol is mediation. The symbol is not God, nor the rites. The constitutive experience of the identity or of popular wisdom, according to Scannone, is *symbolon*, that is to say, unity in difference. This experience of identity in difference is that which enables Latin American popular culture to maintain critical leverage (*coloca...en una posición antagónica*) vis-à-vis hegemonic discourse.<sup>44</sup>

Before the actual forging of a symbol, there is a potential for symbolic discourse that is not the invention of a single craftsman of language (be it the self-proclaimed religious prophet or the well remunerated political speechwriter). It is the sacred possession of a

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<sup>42</sup> RNP, 219-222.

<sup>43</sup> RNP 208-211.

<sup>44</sup> Para leer a Francisco, 184.

people. In the theology of the people, prophets and political actors depend upon this popular reserve of wisdom. The Latin American theologian of the symbol inhabits the space in which the people of God speak with and through symbols. By accompanying the people, the theologian can articulate and reflect upon this discourse wisely. The event of the symbolic is the total reality of accompaniment, listening, pondering, and systematizing. Symbolism cannot be reduced to just one moment in this integrated and time-consuming process.

### C. Acting in accord with a Liberating Prudential-Practical Reason that unfolds “Weness”

Scannone talks about the need to articulate a philosophy of “weness.”<sup>45</sup> He is aware of the work of Klaus Hemmerle and Piero Coda along these lines, and he is also aware his notion of the “we” is very much tied to a distinctively Latin American understanding of belonging to a “people.” The understanding of “we, the people” in the preamble to the United States Constitution has a very different theological anthropology than the one developed by Scannone.<sup>46</sup> It is not the civil religion of North America, nor is it necessarily opposed to it. Here the basic sense is that a palpable and palpably religious belonging together of a distinct social body with its own, fully articulated cultural and political history that has a mission to be of service to those who are at the margins. “Weness” neither assumes nor rejects the idea of a pre-existing Catholic culture. Its task, however, is to elicit from the mysticism of the people an anti-authoritarian, communitarian idea of shared subjectivity.

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<sup>45</sup> RNP 87-100, 143-57. The neologisms “weness,” “weification,” etc. are taken by Scannone from a Jesuit philosopher of liberation named Miguel Manzanara. He is the Director of the Institute for Bio-Ethics at the Catholic University of Cochabamba in Bolivia. For the general principles, see his essay, “Fundamentación de la ética de la nostridad,” *Scripta Fulgentina*, Año VIII/1-2, No. 15-16 (enero-Diciembre 1998): 257-307

<sup>46</sup> At some future point, I hope to explore this topic, but it cannot be succinctly treated here. To do this, one must engage, *inter alia*, the debate between those who emphasize the origins of U.S. constitutional theory in British individualism (Locke) and the secular strands of the French Enlightenment and those who emphasize the more communitarian and Hebraic republicanism of the Puritans.

Unlike Ernesto LeClau and other political thinkers in Argentina who have linked a post-modern appropriation of mysticism directly to a reinvigorated Peronism, Scannone approaches this task as theologian dedicated to the Church's social teaching and follows a two-step process: 1.) the analectical movement from popular Catholicism to the mysticism of the people and 2.) the forging of a communitarian subjectivity using a post-Hegelian Trinitarian hermeneutics of the Christian *pneuma*.<sup>47</sup> In this second step, we will also see how Scannone allies himself with Gastón Fessard, Jean-Luc Marion, Methol Ferré, Carlos Cullen, and against Emmanuel Levinas, who rejected outright the theological underpinnings of this concept of the people.<sup>48</sup>

What kind of mysticism binds the people of God together as a unified body? How is the theologian to approach that reality? The Argentine Jesuit Jorge Seibold was the first to coin the term *mística popular*. Paul VI seemed to be referring to the same reality in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* when he spoke about popular piety.<sup>49</sup> Starting with the CELAM General Conference in Puebla (1972) and extending into Aparecida and the Pontificate of Pope Francis, the same trajectory of theological reasoning is at work.<sup>50</sup> Scannone's analectic philosophy of the symbol undergirds these developments and was developed in conjunction with them. Scannone provides a philosophical justification not just for the practice of popular piety but for its essential role in the promotion of human dignity in an intercultural context. On the basis of his dialogue with the interlocutors just mentioned, Scannone highlights the religious and ethical dimension of this new

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<sup>47</sup> On Ernesto LeClau, see his *On Populist Reason* (Verso, 2005). LeClau is not alone among post-modernists who have appropriated traditional sources of Christian theology, especially mystical theology, for political purposes. He stands together with Giorgio Agamben and Julia Kristeva in this regard.

<sup>48</sup> See RNP, 100 and Juan Carlos Scannone, "El sujeto comunitario de la espiritualidad y la mística populares," *Stromata* 70,2 (julio-diciembre 2014): 195. Find the volume: *Sabiduría popular, símbolo y filosofía*, ed. Juan Carlos Scannone (Buenos Aires: Guadalupe, 1984), which includes this debate with Levinas.

<sup>49</sup> *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 48. In N. 18 of the same document he refers to this as "collective conscience."

<sup>50</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium* 126. A key figure in this development, who is recognized in the writings of Scannone, is the Schönstatt priest, Joaquín Alliende. More work needs to be done about his contribution.



communion making an important connection between the openly religious elements and the new sense of ethical obligation:

Without negating ethical transcendence and divine Illeity, one likewise recognizes the numinous and chthonic moment within religion, to the degree that it can be recuperated by its ethical moment, focused on a relationship of love and respect for human dignity. The ethical-historical “we” is thus established in a religious mystery that exceeds it and also guarantees its character as an ethical community—at the heart of which each person is irreducible and transcendent. The very incarnate nature of this “we” lies immanently within a history and a culture that is singular even though at the same time [“we” are] called to a multivalent (*plural*), ethical-historical dialogue with cultures.<sup>51</sup>

There is no simple recipe here for relating particularity and universality, but there is a clear attempt to relate to two to one another in an intimate fashion. For example, there is no room either to hide in a religious sect nor to lose one’s religiosity in a secular political movement on a global scale. The piety towards the Absolute Other that arises also from the earth on which a people dwell is fused to a universal and at the same time deeply Christian vision of the absolute dignity of the human person. The particularity of this vision needs guardianship even as a people submits this treasure of wisdom dialogically to the scrutiny and criticism of other cultures across the globe.

The term “active collective subjects” is used by Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium*.<sup>52</sup> What are the roots of this notion in Scannone’s thought? Drawing upon Lonergan’s *Insight* and the dynamic notion of a finite spirit within contemporary Trinitarian theology, Scannone charts a middle course between individualism and collectivism. Lonergan develops four transcendental operations that can apply to the idea of a communitarian subject: experience, insight, judgment, and decision.<sup>53</sup> Lonergan recognizes that within this matrix *sensus communis* in a particular society could augment the communitarian subjectivity of a people. This augmentation would

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<sup>51</sup> RNP, 100.

<sup>52</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium* 236.

<sup>53</sup> Scannone bases this interpretation upon an unpublished paper of the Gregorian University’s Gerard Whelan that focuses on chapters 7 and 20 of *Insight*.

then include insights that were arrived at not just by individuals but in the collective experience, judgment, and decisions of a people. Scannone then uses the Lonerganian notion of a world that is not experienced *immediately* but in fact as mediated by meaning and value in order to explicate what Pope Francis says about the symbolic collective subjectivity of a people in *Evangelii Gaudium*. Symbols and rites like an annual procession to a local Marian shrine could contribute to such shared wisdom, but the symbols by themselves without the shared insight of the people into their collective meaning for the people do not rise to the level of communitarian subjectivity. The theologian of the people thus stands at the interpretative bridge between the critical consciousness of the academic community and the popular wisdom of the people of God. The traffic must be kept moving in both directions.

The theological key to communitarian subjectivity comes from Trinitarian theology and, more specifically, a hermeneutical insight into the *post*-Hegelian (i.e., *analectical*) determination of the unfolding role of the finite spirit in the world. Medieval theology, specifically, Richard of St. Victor in his treatise *De Trinitate* had postulated that the Holy Spirit could be conceived as the *condilectus* (beloved companion) or “third” that is begotten from and joins the love of the Father and the Son. This unity in difference of shared love serves a way of identifying theologically the radical deficiency of the Hegelian sublation of differences into an Absolute philosophy. Paul Ricoeur had already noted the need to develop a post-Hegelian discourse for collective subjectivity in which the notion of interpersonal unity and difference is not carried upward into the realm of the philosophical concept. Scannone, using Jean-Luc Marion’s and Gastón Fessard’s own Trinitarian supplement to Ricoeur’s philosophical supplement of Hegel, thus affirms the divinely given model of “the third” (*el tercero*) as the key to affirming a pluriformity that prioritizes unity without being overcome by homogeneity. Trinitarian love is the highest form of unity in difference, but historical subjects in this pilgrim state have no unmediated access to its fruits. For Scannone, its trace in the ethical realm of finite spirit is still the path to follow in

exploring how subjectivity can be a possession of a people without reducing that people to a non-individuated whole or a meaningless conglomeration of individual subjectivities.

#### D. Scannone's overall contribution to Bergoglio's Theology of the People

Scannone is one of the foremost interpreters of Pope Francis's theology of the people.<sup>54</sup> Pope Francis even cites Scannone's work on the socio-ecology of the poor in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*.<sup>55</sup> But the commonality between these two *Porteños* goes much deeper. As Emilce Cuda perceptively recognizes, Scannone's philosophy of symbolic action and especially his articulation of a public philosophy of "weness" goes to the heart of the Catholic social thought that Bergoglio took with him to the pontificate. She calls Scannone's thought *una muestra*, an exhibit or underlying pattern, of the philosophical presuppositions behind the Argentine theology of the people.<sup>56</sup> In particular, she wishes to explicate how the analectic logic of the Argentine school is both a mode of direct resistance against social injustice and the antithesis of the conflict-ridden analysis of the Marxist reading of the class struggle in history. She writes:

The "pre-category" of *estar* in the theology of the people refers to the existence of we the people, that is, one people in particular understood as a collective or communitarian subject, but situated, as a universal that is situated.<sup>57</sup>

Marxist materialism is antithetical to a Christian theology of liberation because of its allegiance to a closed structure for interpreting history (as opposed to the Levinasian openness that transcends *all* dialectics of history) and because of its allegiance to the priority of conflict over unity. Scannone uses the categories of people/anti-people as criteria of discernment to avoid the class-based dichotomy.<sup>58</sup> The mediation of being

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<sup>54</sup> Juan Carlos Scannone, "Pope Francis and the Theology of the People," *Theological Studies* 77,1 (2016): 118-35.

<sup>55</sup> See the footnote to *Laudato Si'* 149: "Some authors have emphasized the values frequently found, for example, in the villas, chabolas or favelas of Latin America: cf. Juan Carlos Scannone, S.J., 'La irrupción del pobre y la lógica de la gratuidad', in Juan Carlos Scannone and Marcelo Perine (eds.), *Irrupción del pobre y quehacer filosófico. Hacia una nueva racionalidad*, Buenos Aires, 1993, 225-230."

<sup>56</sup> *Para leer a Francisco*, 163.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Juan Carlos Scannone, "Pope Francis and the Theology of the People," xxx.

through culture and symbolic representation is another reality that is ignored in a strictly empirical or scientific viewpoint, including that of a social scientist unmoored from culture and human normativity. In one sense, the real value of Scannone's analysis is to recover an original insight into the relationship between ethics and ethos, i.e., to see moral norms as mediated in popular forms of wisdom and to see popular forms of wisdom as bearers of moral norms.<sup>59</sup> There is no reduction of ethics to mere ethnography, but there is a challenge to articulate the proper moral relationship between the prudential application of inculturated wisdom and the living communities composed of faithful families from diverse cultures and sustained by their authentic desire to exercise vibrant personal and social agency in a globalized economy that does not deprive them of land, labor, or lodging.<sup>60</sup> Speaking about the singular importance of Scannone's work, Cuda writes: "the symbol is the 'whence' on the basis of which the theologian reflects, gathers [popular] wisdom into concepts, and systematizes those concepts."<sup>61</sup> One need not claim that Bergoglio has read in a systematic fashion the work of Scannone in order to see an underlying affinity with the Pope's theology of the people. The Pope's choice and deployment of symbols in his trip to the United States certainly seem to fit the Argentine mold represented by Scannone's thinking. In both cases, the Latin American inculturation of theological ethics "destructures" the values of the aggressor who is perpetrating injustice, not through armed conflict but through the creation of a new synthesis that resists the oppression, a synthesis that is critical and

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>60</sup> The three T's of Pope Francis's address to popular movements (*techo, trabajo, y tierra*) are here rendered in English as 3 L's. I am not aware of a direct connection between these addresses and the philosophy of Scannone, but the underlying ideas are identical.

<sup>61</sup> Para leer a Francisco, 189.

socially relevant and at the same time values deeply the symbolic manifestations of wisdom found in the everyday lives of the people of God.<sup>62</sup>

### 3. Lincoln's "Latino" Lectern and a New Approach to Religious Freedom in the U.S.

To conclude, let us return to one of the images with which we began, Lincoln's lectern with the Argentine Pope standing behind it. Harry S. Stout said that Lincoln's Gettysburg Address was more than exemplary political rhetoric. It became "the sacred Scripture of the Civil War's innermost spiritual meaning."<sup>63</sup> Pope was not just gesturing in a pseudo-political manner. Pope Francis drew upon this spiritual symbolism of the Gettysburg address in his speech in Philadelphia by deploying Lincoln's lectern as a religious symbol of religious freedom today and, simultaneously, the historical engagement of Latinos in the U.S. Church and society. This linkage is critical for understanding the depth and breadth of the Argentine theology of the people. Religious freedom is not a weapon that is needed to fight all encroachments of the state upon the sacred terrain of the Church. Nor is it a way of marking a strict boundary between Church and state. Authentic religious freedom only grows when all the boats are lifted. Pope Francis was handing Lincoln's lectern over to the Hispanic Catholics who are here in the United States today, some with documents and others without them. In word and deed, his message was that of greater social inclusion *and* of a new order of *libertas ecclesiae*, freedom such that the Church's authentic moral vision is not dictated by the government. Too often Catholics who are engaged in the naked public square choose one or the other of these two urgently needed ideals. The symbolism of Lincoln's lectern was deployed by the Argentine Pope to defend both. Scannone's philosophy and phenomenology of the symbol undergirds that choice.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>63</sup> Harry S. Stout, *Upon the Altar of the Nation: A Moral History of the Civil War* (New York: Penguin, 2006), xxx.