Imago Dei, Imago Trinitatis,
the Person in Community – a Divine Reality
and Human Inspiration

by

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Regis College
and the Graduate Centre for Theological Studies of the Toronto School of Theology.
In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Theology awarded by Regis College and the University of Toronto

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Regis College and the University of Toronto

2018

Abstract

Using the work of B. Lonergan and H.U. von Balthasar to enhance our understanding of the individual within the community, I argue that the African notion of Ubuntu enriches our understanding of humanity through recognizing the role and importance of community. I use Lonergan to show that awareness of another’s humanity leads to a deeper awareness of one’s own and that the ultimate form of being-in-relationship is a being-in-love which requires authenticity and self-transcendence. I argue that Ubuntu is another way of naming self-transcendence from an African perspective. Drawing on the works of Balthasar, theologically this recognition of community not only enhances our understanding of humanity but alludes to the profound theological recognition that the Imago Dei in the other is most profoundly an Imago Trinitatis. Since God cannot be God out of relationship with God, human persons require community, and the ecclesial community to be most fully human persons.
Acknowledgments

I am first of all grateful to God for calling me into the Society of Jesus and for constantly drawing me closer to Him, especially during this time of theological studies. I am grateful to Fr David Smolira, S.J. for originally missioning me to Toronto, and to his successor, Fr David Rowan, S.J. and the Jesuits of the South African Region of the Society of Jesus for giving me the time and space to start and finish this degree. I am especially grateful to my supervisor, Professor Gill Goulding, C.J. of Regis College, for her unfailing support, encouragement, and advice throughout my work on this thesis; and to my Rector Fr Conlin Mulvihill, S.J. and Fr Matthew Dunch, S.J. for their help and support, especially during the final stages of submitting this thesis.

I am also grateful to other Regis College Professors: Gilles Mongeau, S.J. and, at the time, Jeremy Wilkins, for their unwavering support and who offered me classes and seminars at Regis College. I shall be forever grateful to all three of them for introducing me to Hans Urs von Balthasar, Bernard Lonergan, S.J. and Thomas Aquinas and for so passionately teaching me and modelling what a Theology Professor should be like. I am also very thankful for all of their friendship, generosity and encouragement during this process.

Regis College will forever have a special place in my heart. To the other faculty, staff and students, especially Eric Mabry and Brian Bajzek, whom I had the privilege of befriending and collaborating with, thank you for creating such a wonderful academic environment. I am especially grateful for the community and friendships generated in the many social activities and for the opportunity to serve on the Student Council and Academic Board.

I am also grateful to the broader community of the Toronto School of Theology especially in the persons of Professor Thomas Reynolds of Emmanuel College, Professor Michael Vertin of the
University of St Michael’s College, Professor Joseph Mangina of Wycliffe College, and Professor John Dadosky of Regis College whose courses I enjoyed and whose subjects, whilst not directly appearing in this thesis, no doubt, indirectly inspired some of this work. I am honoured to have done this research in such an ecumenical environment and am grateful to the Graduate Centre for Theological Studies for offering me the opportunity to do this degree. I also wish to record my thanks to my fellow members of the TST Graduate Students’ Association whose company I enjoyed during my degree and whose friendships enriched my time in Toronto.

I acknowledge with thanks the financial and spiritual support of the Society of Jesus. I am also grateful to the Jesuit communities in which I lived as I worked on this thesis, first at the Regis College Community in Toronto and then at St Ignatius House in Johannesburg, South Africa, and to Fathers Winston Rye, S.J. and Peter Bisson, S.J. who were a constant source of encouragement and whose senses of humor picked me up during the cold winters and provided the perspective and motivation to carry on.

During my studies I was ordained to the Deaconate and wish to thank the community and parish of St Thomas Aquinas at the Newman Centre. The pastoral experience enriched my theological reflection. This was further enhanced after my ordination to the priesthood during my year as an Assistant Pastor and Assistant Chaplain at Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Braamfontein, South Africa, and I would like to thank these communities for encouraging me.

I am finally also grateful to my mother, Jenny Charlesworth, for agreeing to proof-read a final draft of this thesis, and to Fr Anthony Egan, S.J. for his advice and support during the final stages of completing this thesis in South Africa.

Fr Matthew Charlesworth, S.J.
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Chapter 1 A contextualization and statement of the African understanding of Persons and Communities and how a person’s mission is defined in relation to their community

1.1 Introduction

I think it is important to note that I am writing this as a white South African male religious who was born outside of Africa but spent all of his formative years in South Africa and it is to South Africa that I have returned and where I now live and work as an ordained priest.1 In the course of my research for this thesis there has been some fine tuning to the original thesis statement as indicated in the proposal. This thesis will consider how the African concept of Ubuntu which privileges life and relationship in community is a good starting point in African cultures to explore the importance of the Trinity and of finding God in community. It will explore how the works of Bernard Lonergan and Hans Urs von Balthasar can offer a grammar to articulate how the African concept of Ubuntu aids us in recovering the importance of persons in community in relationship with one another, thus counter-acting the aggressive individualism that pervades our age2.

1 Readers may be aware of an ongoing discussion in post-Apartheid South Africa, surrounding white privilege, white guilt and the entire question of whether it is possible for a white person to comment on South African issues. My response to this is that I believe this discourse is necessary and valuable but that it does not preclude me from reflecting on my own experience. Indeed, it is the work of Bernard Lonergan and his insistence on being attentive to one’s own experience that has attracted me to the work of this author and why it is I am using him as an interlocutor in my thesis. It is from my experience that I write and I believe, initially writing from a distance – in Toronto, Canada – affords me some perspective. Not least, it has enabled me to encounter the works of Bernard Lonergan and Hans Urs von Balthasar and to reflect upon the theology I have studied, and learned to apply.

2 I am indebted to Joseph L. Mangina of Wycliffe College, Toronto School of Theology, for pointing out to me that though in this thesis I have elected to use two specific conversation partners, the “particular understandings of the self needs to be situated on a broader landscape of modern philosophy and theology.” He reminded me that
In this thesis I therefore engage with the significant African concept of *Ubuntu*, which I explain below. I preface my discussion noting that the perspective that I am writing from – as a white South African male religious – will affect my view on what is seen to be an aspect of African culture, but I am convinced that my contribution is useful. With that caveat, I shall now offer some definitions and my own interpretations on the concepts that I shall be discussing. I think it is important to define the following terms: persons as understood in general, persons as understood in Africa, *Ubuntu*, and the notions of mission and community.

### 1.2 An explanation of ‘person’

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) gives three broad definitions of the term ‘person’. It defines it as a ‘rôle taken by a person’, or ‘a human being’ or admits to a technical usage in domains such as theology, philosophy, law, grammar and zoology. In defining person as ‘a human being’ there is a philosophical reference to a person who is ‘a conscious or rational [human] being’. In the technical sense of the term, reference is made to the theological sense used within concepts such as hypostasis and Trinity. There is thus a common usage understanding of persons, which applies to each person, and a specifically theological understanding of persons which relates to divine persons. In terms of a common understanding, a definition could be as simple as the one provided by the OED above. Or it could be more

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“Personalist philosophy (e.g. Ludwig von Feuerbach, Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas) has often stressed the indispensability of the other for self-understanding. Likewise, many contemporary theologians have posited a connection between the tripersonal Trinity and the relational *Imago Dei*. Examples here would include Karl Rahner, Karl Barth, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jürgen Molmann, Robert Jenson, and John Zizioulas, along with many others.” I acknowledge the broader nature of this conversation, and am grateful for his comment, but for the purposes of this thesis I wish to focus on two specific interlocutors, though I do acknowledge, and am grateful to Mangina for reminding me, that other conversation partners might also enrich this project.
complex. An example of this kind of definition of person is offered by the sociologist and critical realist, Christian Smith, who expands upon the OED’s simple ‘conscious or rational’ modifier, when he suggests that a person is:

a conscious, reflexive, embodied, self-transcending center 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 inter-subjectivity in order to develop and sustain his or her own incommunicable self in loving relationships with other personal selves and with the non-personal world.

This common usage definition is at once more nuanced and complex. From it we can observe important issues of consideration, such as agency (which begs the question of freedom), inter-subjectivity and loving relationships (which invites consideration of community), and experience and commitment (which invites reflection on Bernard Lonergan’s levels of consciousness).

For the moment, I am happy to accept that the term human person be used here in the sense of the common usage understanding of ‘a human being,’ but accept the importance of the ‘conscious or rational’ modifier since I believe persons are conscious of their own dignity as persons, and of their rational nature. Without such rational awareness, the human being is an individual among many, rather than a person in community. In terms of persons related to communities, the addition of persons being able to ‘self-transcend’ and being responsible for their ‘inter-subjectivity’ are helpful concepts to which we shall return. But all of this is still

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3 Christian Smith is the William R. Kenan, Jr., Professor of Sociology, director of the Center for the Study of Religion and Society, and director of the Center for Social Research at the University of Notre Dame.


within the common usage understanding; and the theological understanding of Person could still enrich our overall understanding of the term.

Hans Urs von Balthasar, in his article ‘On the concept of person’\(^6\) distinguishes between the individual and the person, noting that “a special dignity is ascribed to the person, which the individual as such does not possess.”\(^7\) As explained through reference to a dictionary, historically the term ‘person’ took on a theological and common usage understanding. Balthasar notes that in the common usage understanding, a more precise definition of person can be found in moral theology, law and philosophy, but in the theological understanding “the concept of person acquires a completely new sense first in Trinitarian doctrine and then in Christology.”\(^8\) Balthasar helpfully distinguishes between a person and an individual, and explains that personhood when deprived of the theological understanding of person, is just an individual. He asserts that “the word person in the sense of a human being, and in contradistinction to mere individuality, receives its special dignity in history when it is illuminated by the unique theological meaning”\(^9\) He continues “when this is not the case … the human person sinks back into the sphere of mere individuality.”\(^10\) Balthasar cites Jacques Maritain’s dictum: “The individual exists for the society, but the society exists for the person”\(^11\) and admits that Philosophy can “appropriate for the human person the dignity bestowed on person[s]”\(^12\) by the ‘unique theological meaning’ he referred to above. The association with dignity and the human person is, I assert, similar to and

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\(^7\) Ibid., 18.

\(^8\) Ibid., 19.

\(^9\) Ibid.

\(^10\) Ibid.

\(^11\) Ibid., 18.

\(^12\) Ibid., 19.
compatible with the African understanding of person in which personhood is attained through the nurturing and exercise of ‘Ubuntu’.

Balthasar thus speaks of a ‘theological meaning’ that illumines our understanding of person. The whole question of meaning is also important for Bernard Lonergan, who argues that a community “is not just a number of [persons] within a geographical frontier. [Community] is an achievement of common meaning, and there are kinds and degrees of achievement.”13 At this point I want to clarify what the African understanding of these terms are, accepting as I do the broad definition of person as a conscious and rational human being who is in the process of self-transcendence and in a loving inter-subjective relationship with their community.

1.3 Persons as understood in Africa

It would be a truism to say that within Africa there is an abundance of persons because there is an abundance of human beings. Not all of these persons are flourishing it must be said, but they do exist: over 1.2 billion, with 6 million living in Southern Africa14. The continent of Africa is made up of at least 54 internationally recognized countries, each of which contain persons belonging to various tribes and speaking even more varied languages (estimated at 2,000 languages or dialects). Without a doubt, Africa is more diverse than Europe or North America. The question of Persons and Communities is an important one given the level of diversity. It is

also important because of the level of conflict that exists in Africa in which communities and persons are frequently torn-apart or profoundly wounded.

In exploring the person in community – and especially the person in community in Africa – I would make the following general observation, that in Africa communities have primacy over persons. This means that persons are always born into a community and grow out of a community. This is perhaps evident upon self-reflection and from first principles, but Bernard Lonergan explains that people are “born into a community that possesses a common fund of tested answers, and from that fund each may draw his variable share, measured by his capacity, his interests, and his energy.”\textsuperscript{15} Here we see how for Lonergan, communities are sources of common meaning (‘a common fund of tested answers’). This could be called ‘wisdom’ or ‘accepted best practice’, or even just ‘tradition’. But it is plain to see that wherever wisdom or tradition exist, that existence comes from an experience prior to the individual person entering and joining that community. So, we can accept that a person always emerges from the community. We have just to think of how we grew up, learning a language, within a family, having friendships, to realize that as we became persons, that is more conscious and rational human beings, the result of that effort was proportional to the community we grew up in and came out of. Within Africa, then, African persons arise out of African communities, and one of the distinctive marks of African communities is their understanding of persons which has clear parameters and is exemplified by their understanding of \textit{Ubuntu}, which I will define in the

following section. But first it is important to examine the African understanding of communities, and persons.

One might think that a community is a collection of persons, or in Lonergan’s view, ‘constituted by persons’. To some extent it is, but it is also made up of more than just the persons since persons in community are intending subjects who embrace some form of meaning. Each community offers an understanding of itself and so helps other communities understand themselves. Through this process persons come to appreciate their personhood as constitutive of the community. In this way communities persist through time and space, in history, whereas persons appear and disappear within it. I will have more to say about meaning and community when I explore Lonergan’s particular views about this. For the moment, I would suggest that the African understanding of community relies on a distinct understanding of personhood, contained in the term Ubuntu. I shall now explain what is distinctive about this African understanding of person.

Similar to the theological understanding of Balthasar in which the theological meaning of person enriched our understanding of individuals as persons, within the African discourse on persons there is also a distinction drawn between individuals and persons, and both of these involve a relationship with community. Bujo, a prominent African theologian, notes that “[a]mong experts it has become common knowledge that the African person can only be understood in reference to his/her basic attitude towards life.”\(^{16}\) The priority and relationship between persons and

communities in Africa can be complex. Bujo notes that “the statement that in Africa the community alone matters and not the individual is hardly right. It has already been mentioned that in many ethnic communities in Africa the giving of a name manifests the high esteem attributed to the individual.”17 He states later that “[a]lthough the individual is embedded in the community”18 it must be remembered that “he or she is a unique and inexchangeable [sic] being”19 and “because there is interdependence between the community and the individual, the community must not subordinate what is particular, but should promote and support it, because without the individuality of the single members it would totally disintegrate”20. He explains that “interaction, within the African context, makes it clear that the individual is an incomplete being who is basically dependent on the community.”21

This supports my earlier observation that communities are prior to persons. Persons enter and join communities. Within Africa this is often achieved through an initiation rite. Bujo explains that “the individual becomes a community-oriented being through the initiation rite”22 This binds the person to the community. He notes that “without [the] communitarian relationship there is no identity for the African person. Only together with others can one become a human person”23. This is where the concept of Ubuntu becomes relevant.

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17 Ibid., 147.
18 Ibid., 148.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
1.4 Ubuntu

Ubuntu is a Nguni word consisting of the “augment prefix u-”, the abstract noun prefix bu-, and the noun stem -ntu, meaning ‘person’ in Bantu languages.”\(^{24}\) It has been recognized by the courts in South Africa “as being an important source of law within the context of strained or broken relationships amongst individuals or communities”\(^{25}\) and is as such a key understanding in African communities, particularly in building up communities. Dreyer explains how Kamwangamalu, “summarising a number of descriptions and definitions of Ubuntu in an article on a sociolinguistic perspective on Ubuntu”\(^{26}\), proposes the following:

> These definitions, and others, have one theme in common: Ubuntu is a value system which governs societies across the African continent. It is a system against whose values the members of a community measure their ‘humaness’. These values, like the Ubuntu system from which they flow, are not innate but are rather acquired in society and are transmitted from one generation to another by means of oral genres such as fables, proverbs, myths, riddles, and story-telling.\(^{27}\)

In his article “What is Ubuntu?”, Gade categorizes two broad answers to his title’s question which represent ways in which this value system can be understood. The first describes Ubuntu as “a moral quality of a person”, whilst the second describes it as a ‘phenomenon’ according to which persons are ‘interconnected’.\(^{28}\) He asks the question:


\(^{27}\) Kamwangamalu, "Ubuntu in South Africa," 27.

why [was it] in South Africa in the 1990s that Ubuntu was most likely defined for the first time as something connected with the proverb umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu? Was the connection between Ubuntu and the proverb established and emphasized because the idea that Ubuntu has to do with interconnectedness could be used by politicians and others as a rationale against the segregation ideas of the previous apartheid era? By connecting Ubuntu with specific ideas about interconnectedness, these ideas might certainly gain legitimacy (or further legitimacy) among blacks, who considered Ubuntu to be something good and deeply rooted in their culture.29

Gade answers his question concluding that “a few authors began using the terms ‘philosophy’ and ‘ethic’ to describe what Ubuntu is towards the end of the period 1846 to 1980.”30 And that after first appearing in writing in 1846, “more than a century passed before the first authors began to associate Ubuntu with a philosophy or an ethic.”31

One important author who began to associate Ubuntu with a ‘philosophy’ or an ‘ethic’, and who has reflected on the theological importance of the concept of Ubuntu, is Anglican Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu. He acknowledged that: “Ubuntu is very difficult to render into a Western language”32 and explained that it is because:

[i]t speaks to the very essence of being human. When you want to give high praise to someone we say, “Yu, u nobuntu”; he or she has Ubuntu. This means that they are generous, hospitable, friendly, caring and compassionate. They share what they have. It also means that my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in theirs. We belong in a bundle of life. We say, “a person is a person through other people” (in Xhosa Ubuntu ungamuntu ngabantu abantu and in Zulu Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu). I am human because I belong, I participate, I share. A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good; for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes with knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are.33

30 Ibid., 309.
31 Ibid.
32 Desmond Tutu, No Future without Forgiveness (hereafter No Future without Forgiveness) (London: Rider, 1999), 34-35.
33 Ibid.
This description of *Ubuntu* is of a human person making right-value judgements and who is integrally and positively in relationship to other persons in their community and is living virtuously, and thus sides with Gade’s identification of *Ubuntu* as a moral quality.

Gade, however, attributes the influence of *Ubuntu* primarily to the arguably lesser widely known, but still important, University of Cape Town philosophy lecturer, Augustine Shutte\(^34\), whose writings on *Ubuntu* Gade highlights. Gade states:

> In 1993, Augustine Shutte increased the awareness of the proverb ‘*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*’ by publishing *Philosophy for Africa*. … In 1993, the Epilogue of the Interim Constitution was the cause of increasing discussion about the nature of *Ubuntu* by stating that in addressing the divisions and strife of the past, there is ‘a need for *Ubuntu*.’ … During the period 1993 to 1995, Augustine Shutte developed the idea that the proverb ‘*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*’ could be used to describe what *Ubuntu* is.\(^35\)

Gade explains how the incorporation of *Ubuntu* into the Interim Constitution of South Africa led to the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

> The Epilogue contains the negotiated agreement about how the divisions and strife of the apartheid era should be dealt with in the new democratic South Africa. Immediately after the statement that ‘there is a need for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation but not for retaliation, a need for *Ubuntu* but not for victimization,’ the Epilogue explains that: ‘In order to advance such reconciliation and reconstruction, amnesty shall be granted in respect of acts, omissions and offences associated with political objectives and committed in the course of the conflicts of the past’ (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 200 of 1993: Epilogue after Section 251). In the next sentence, the Epilogue decrees that Parliament should adopt a law to establish the mechanisms, criteria, and procedures by which amnesty should be dealt with. This was done in 1995 with the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, which established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu.\(^36\)

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\(^{34}\) Dr Augustine Shutte (1938-2016) taught Philosophy at the University of Cape Town from 1972-2009.  
\(^{35}\) Gade, ”The Historical Development of the Written Discourses on Ubuntu,” 315.  
\(^{36}\) Ibid., 313.
In establishing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission one could genuinely question whether *Ubuntu* was believed to be really a core defining feature of persons in Africa, whether a moral quality or a phenomenon, or whether it was, rather, an example of people sub-consciously retrieving an earlier etymology of person, from the Greek *prosōpon*, which referred to masks or faces worn in Greek Theatre, but calling it *Ubuntu*, such that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was behaving out of public pressure to fulfill the mask of ‘reconciling humanity’ but that this was not a value to be believed in and acted from, but rather a politically-correct mask to be used to resolve resentments and inequalities in the country. Certainly, many people believed that *Ubuntu* was valuable, but as the current crisis in South Africa reveals, the dissonance between one’s beliefs and actions at least support the flagging of this as a question. It is my contention, however, that there is a valuable insight in the notion of *Ubuntu*, that can be enriched with further study and reference to the works of Lonergan and Balthasar.

### 1.5 Notions of mission and community

I believe that it is in the notions of mission and community that Balthasar and Lonergan can enrich *Ubuntu*. I have already noted how Bujo argued for the necessity of community for African persons, and thus the question is how the relationship between persons, their interconnectedness or interrelatedness in *Ubuntu*, is similar or identical to the inter-subjectivity described in Lonergan’s work, and how does this interconnectedness or interrelatedness promote authenticity? Augustine Shutte, cited above, was after all, a former Dominican and essentially a
Thomist\(^\text{37}\), which in a sense suggests there is a connection with his view of the need for *Ubuntu*, and the compatibility of that need with other Thomist philosophers, such as Bernard Lonergan.

Though he did it unknowingly and independently, I believe that Lonergan has identified one central aspect of *Ubuntu* when he speaks of men and women achieving authenticity in self-transcendence\(^\text{38}\). Lonergan understood our capacity for self-transcendence as being constituted in our transcendental notions, that is “our questions for intelligence, for reflection, for deliberation”\(^\text{39}\) and that capacity is actualized when “one falls in love”\(^\text{40}\) and becomes a “being-in-love”\(^\text{41}\). This ‘being-in-love’ is premised on being-in-relationship, and that is precisely what *Ubuntu* is all about.

Thus, one of the areas I wish to explore is *Ubuntu*’s relationship with Lonergan’s understanding of authentic self-transcendence. Lonergan differentiates between our being-in-love with other persons and with God, but notes that we are persons in our self-transcendence, and inasmuch as we are not self-transcending our “transcendental subjectivity is mutilated or abolished.”\(^\text{42}\) I would assert that this is similar to *Ubuntu*’s understanding of not being a person unless we

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\(^{37}\) I am indebted to a member of my Jesuit Community, Anthony Egan, S.J., who knew Dr Shutte from the 1980’s until his death in 2016, and who introduced me to Dr Shutte’s work and sharing with me his experiences of Dr Shutte and his work on Ubuntu.

\(^{38}\) Lonergan, *Method*, 104. In this regard, a similar scholar who offers one of the most interesting European understandings that mirrors the African understanding of persons is the thought of John Macmurray (1891-1976) who delivered the Gifford Lecture ‘The Form of the Personal’ in 1953 and 1954 at the University of Glasgow. John Macmurray’s second lecturing post was in South Africa as Chair of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1921-1922. See John Macmurray, *Persons in Relation* (hereafter *Persons in Relation*) (London: Faber and Faber, 1961); John Macmurray, *The Self as Agent* (hereafter *The Self as Agent*) (London: Faber and Faber, 1957).


\(^{40}\) Ibid.

\(^{41}\) Ibid.

\(^{42}\) Ibid., 103.
recognize the other, and that therefore *Ubuntu* is another way of naming self-transcendence from an African perspective and of emphasizing the importance of transcendental subjectivity.

Balthasar can make a two-fold contribution to deepening our understanding of *Ubuntu*. Firstly, he stresses the value of ‘theological meaning’ as being valuable in discussing persons. I would argue that in recognizing the dignity, i.e. the humanity, of others, we can at a very profound level also acknowledge the Image of God (the *Imago Dei*) in that person. In fact, I believe that is what recognizing the dignity of humanity entails. In appreciating the link between self-transcendence and authentic persons, however, we affirm the importance of transcendental subjectivity, which we see, at its best, in being-in-love, and this will lay the ground for the profound theological meaning within *Ubuntu* which is to see the *Imago Trinitatis* in the *Imago Dei*: that God-self is in fact a relationship of being-in-love, as being love itself.

Secondly, however, Balthasar notes that in the person of Jesus, his personhood is identical to his mission. Balthasar states that “[p]articipation in the mission of Christ … [is] the actual core of the reality of the person”[44] This “*missio* is the economic form of the eternal *processio* that constitutes the persons of the Son and of the Spirit in God”[45] The person’s mission is thus for Balthasar connected to their personhood and that human personhood is connected to Divine personhood. I have explained how *Ubuntu* in Africa creates for each person the mission to relate to others in community. In relating to each other, Africans are enacting the insight that in imitating God we are imitating Divine Persons who are themselves in relationship. The act of

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[45] Ibid.
relating, of nurturing and strengthening the relationship between persons in community is one of the ways that we in fact imitate God. Balthasar argues that we should imitate the Divine Persons not only on a personal level but on a Communal one too… and that our Community can strive to reflect the loving reality of the Trinity. Balthasar’s rich work will be explored in order to answer the question: What is it in the Trinity that makes their community perfect? I suggest that it is in endeavouring to imitate the ‘being-in-love’, of caring for our relationships with ourselves, each other, and our world, that makes for a perfect community and more perfect persons. The insights from Ubuntu, with the deeper understanding of Lonergan’s and Balthasar’s work do, I believe, present a stronger argument for the importance of community in our world, especially in the simultaneously globalized and increasingly individualized world in which we are living today.

1.6 Conclusion
This chapter sought to contextualize the thesis and provide a working definition of terms and concepts. It began with a description of persons in general, noting the distinction between a common usage understanding of the term person, and the specialized understanding, especially the theological understanding. The insight from Balthasar on how the theological meaning enables one to move from individual to person was identified as being important for our discussion. After discussing persons in general, the chapter then turned to examine persons in Africa, noting how in Africa one cannot speak of persons without also speaking of communities. The work of Lonergan in seeing communities as sources of common meaning was introduced, and it was argued that in Africa this common meaning is found in the term Ubuntu. The chapter then offered a definition of Ubuntu, noting how there has been discussion about whether Ubuntu is a moral quality, or a phenomenon, but recent consensus is that it describes a fundamental
interconnectedness or interrelatedness between persons. Specific questions were then identified concerning the mission of a person in community. These will be further explored in the thesis, examining the relationship between authenticity and inter-subjectivity in Lonergan as being helpful to understanding *Ubuntu*, and how the theological meaning of persons and their mission in community, as Balthasar describes, might enrich *Ubuntu*’s understanding of our interrelatedness in community. The chapter concludes with the thesis that the theological meaning contained in *Ubuntu*, that is to say in the recognition that our humanity requires us recognizing the other’s humanity. This is a theological acceptance of the humanity of the other bearing the Image of God. It is made more important in the recognition that the most profound image of God is the recognition of God as Trinity, that is that the Godhead is in fact a divine community of Three Persons engaged in a relationship of not only being-in-love, but by virtue of being Divine, of being love itself.46 Our imitation of the Divine can thus approximate loving relationships that create community. This human community of persons – whether in Africa or elsewhere – is the fruit of our imitation of God who is in truth a community, or Trinity, of love in relationship to God-self. It is in imitating God and through relating with each other that Christians, and followers of the broader Judaeo-Christian faith, find their mission as they appreciate for themselves what it is to know themselves as being created in God’s Image (cf. Gen 1:27).

Having outlined the basic argument of the thesis, the following chapter will proceed to examine the understanding of person and community in the Western Tradition and how the Divine Life of

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the Trinity can serve as a model for the Communitarian Life of Human Persons. This model is then brought into dialogue with *Ubuntu* in Chapter Three and the interconnectedness and interdependence of persons is highlighted as important to our understanding of Community which in Africa is characterized by an awareness of life. Chapter Four will examine Lonergan’s understanding of transcendence, authenticity, community and inter-subjectivity which requires an explanation of his cognitional theory and meaning and how this applies to the act of recognition which is fundamental in *Ubuntu* as it is in recognizing the other’s humanity which allows us to recognize our own. Lonergan’s careful insight is then applied to enrich our understanding of *Ubuntu* and the Trinitarian community of Divine Persons. In Chapter Five, the general content of the theological meaning of persons will be discussed with reference to Balthasar’s work on the Trinity and why the Trinity is a perfection of relationships. The theological meaning of *Ubuntu* recognizing not only the humanity of the other person, but the Image of God in the Other will be developed and the specific theological meaning of the Image of God being the Image of the Trinity will be discussed.

I now turn to consider the understanding of person and community in the Western Tradition and how the Divine Life of the Trinity can serve as a model for the Communitarian Life of Human Persons.
Chapter 2 The Western Tradition’s understanding of Person and Communities

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will proceed to discuss four major points fundamental to the understanding of person and community in the Western Christian Tradition. The first is that there is a distinct understanding of person in the Western Tradition that increasingly privileges individual persons over a community, revealing an emphasis on a Hellenistic approach that neglects the Christian theological fusion of Hellenism with ancient Hebraic theology. It is, as I will explain, the contribution of Hebraic Theology that promoted a sense of community in the Christian understanding of persons. With the decline of Christian thought in contemporary society the insights of Christian theology are lost in favor of secular philosophies that, whilst containing necessary insights, are insufficient from a Christian point of view, to fully explain what it means to be a human person. A second major point is the self-understanding of human persons where each person offers an understanding of him/herself and so helps other persons understand themselves, and in so doing, helps communities appreciate their members. This communal reciprocity of understanding helps the person to understand themselves as part of a community, and to understand themselves as persons. This self-understanding is informed by one’s experience of oneself. If one is a Christian that experience of oneself as a Christian will be important for understanding of self. This process of self-understanding is comprehensively explored in Lonergan’s Cognitional theory\(^\text{47}\) which endeavours to enable persons to be more intentional and therefore more conscious of their cognitional operations. The third point clarifies

\(^{47}\) More fully explored in Chapter 4 of this thesis. See also Lonergan, Method, 13-20.
how a Divine Person may be understood and explains the limitation of the use of the term person in this context. Finally, noting that the Trinity is made up of the three divine Persons I will explore the reality of these relations. The Trinity has sometimes been understood as a ‘super-individual’, ‘one God’, in part because God is simple, according to classical Western theological traditions, including Thomism48. This stress on the unity of God and his one-ness has led, perhaps naively, to some thinking of God not as a community of Divine Persons, distinct in their relating, but as a ‘supra-individual’ God. I will suggest that the community dimension of the Divine Persons is an invitation for us to consider the communitarian aspect in all our lives as human persons. Thus, I will conclude by emphasizing that the Trinity is a Community of three Divine Persons and that as Lonergan notes, “the three Persons are the perfect community, … three subjects of a single, dynamic, existential consciousness”49 who share common understanding, judgement and commitment. To imitate God is thus to imitate this perfect community and to do all the work that is necessary to make that happen. Such an assertion will be a precursor to the next chapter that will consider how African Ubuntu is an understanding of human persons that explicitly requires this commitment.

2.2 The human person in the Western Tradition

There is a distinct understanding of Person in the Western Tradition that is the product of much thought and reflection across centuries. In part this distinct understanding owes much to the

48 For a discussion on God as a substance both simple and manifold see Augustine of Hippo, "On the Trinity", St. Augustine: On the Holy Trinity, Doctrinal Treatises, Moral Treatises (ed. P. Schaff) (A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series; Buffalo, NY 1887) III, page 100, Chapter 6, and on whether God is altogether simple, see Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, I q.3 a.7.

Western Christian tradition in particular, because of the reflection on human and divine persons. In the first section of this chapter I focus on the origins and development of this understanding and show how this traditional view has increasingly privileged the individual persons in their understanding of personhood over communities of persons. What is lost in this understanding, I believe, is the more corporate sense of belonging and relatedness. This results in a view of persons who are completely self-sufficient, and it minimizes, and in some cases almost removes, the sense that persons are also persons because they are recognized as such by others. Our growth into personhood requires that we recognize the other’s growth into personhood. In Chapter 5 I will look at Carolyn Chau’s notion of growing into theological personhood, and how it is that God’s recognition of us as persons, because he created each of us in the image of the Divine Persons, God’s own image, is the primary and sustaining force that assures us of our own personhood. The recognition, I would argue, that is in Ubuntu, confirms for oneself the reality of our personhood, but it is in our relationship with God and others that we can experience our personhood for ourselves. In neglecting that relationship, whether with a fellow human, or with God, the inevitable effect is a reduction of the rôle of other humans and God in the life of that person, a reduction that ultimately also diminishes the person themselves. My thesis is that as we are made in the Image of God, and God who is a Trinity, and therefore who is not only in relationship but who is at the most basic level, pure relations of paternity, filiation, and spiration, relations that are inseparable from God’s very self. To illustrate this point, I shall review the understanding of ‘person’ within the Western (Christian) Tradition. This chapter will thus reveal the hiatus that I hope to show can be addressed using insights from the Ubuntu understanding of persons which will be discussed in the following chapter.
2.3 Etymology of Person

I indicated in the first chapter, that the English word ‘person’ is derived from the Greek *prosōpon*, meaning mask or face and originates from Greek Theatre. It refers to the mask or face worn by actors as they performed a rôle. In Latin *persona* denoted a rôle as well, but it also evolved to include reference to a rational nature and a conscious subject. Gerald O’Collins and Edward Farrugia explain that ‘person’ was originally used “to designate the rôle someone plays on the stage or in life, and then applied to a subsistent, rational individual.” One of the inherent premises in this understanding is that there is a purpose or *telos* which the person must fulfill and which this rôle encompasses. Over time philosophers discussed not just the ability of an individual to assume a rôle, but also what that rôle was, and in the measure that it was achieved one was said to be flourishing or fully human. For the first question, the assumption of personhood was very early on linked to one’s ‘rational nature’, whilst later the focus shifted to consideration of one being a ‘conscious subject’.

Zizioulas notes that “at least in the beginning the Roman use of the term did not differ essentially from the Greek” theatrical usage of *prosōpon* as rôle because, as Zizioulas states “Roman thought which is fundamentally organizational and social, concerns itself not with ontology, with the *being* of man, but with his *relationship* with others, with his ability to form associations, to enter into contracts, to set up collegia, to organize human life in a state.”

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51 I am indebted to Joseph L. Mangina of Wycliffe College, Toronto School of Theology, for pointing out to me how this shift was in no small part due to the Cappadocian Fathers and their innovative distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis*.
53 Ibid., 34.
As noted in the first chapter, it can be argued that *Ubuntu* can be understood as much as a rôle in reconciliation as it is understood as a means of relatedness. Inasmuch as rôle and relationship constitute the understanding of person as *prosōpon*, *Ubuntu* can be the analogous understanding within Africa to *prosōpon* in the Hellenic world, whereby one’s rôle or mission is to relate.

The concept of a rational individual in Gerald O’Collins’s and Edward Farrugia’s explanation recalls debates in the ancient and medieval world which saw the source of personhood to be in the will, in what was seen as one’s ‘rational nature’. Aquinas, who is famous for retrieving Aristotelian thought for Christian theology, notes that Boethius defined a person as “an individual substance of a rational nature.”\(^{54}\) The language of substance is uncommon today. Aquinas explains in one of his replies that “*individual substance* is placed in the definition of person, as signifying the singular in the genus of substance; and the term *rational nature* is added, as signifying the singular in rational substances.”\(^{55}\) Beyond the identification of a person as an individual, I understand this to mean that although one can have individual living creatures, e.g. animals, persons (i.e. human beings) are not just creaturely, though they are creatures, but they are rational creatures, endowed with a rational nature that affords them the potential to reason and become aware. It would be an obvious conclusion that animals all have a rôle to play within God’s Kingdom. All living creatures share in some way the Aristotelian abilities of nutrition, locomotion, sensation, cognition and reproduction, as do human beings. Biologists, zoologists and environmentalists can explain how there is an interconnected network of dependency in the world. This is not just limited to some animals being a source of food for

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\(^{55}\) Ibid., I q.29 a.21 resp.
other animals, but animals are able to prepare habitats conducive for other animals to live in, or are a source of beauty and appreciation for others, and are good in themselves because they are created and possess life, albeit a life that is not as fully conscious as human beings. All creatures thus fulfill their telos.

We read from the Scriptures describing the story of God’s creation that God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.” (Gen 1:24, NRSV) These ‘kinds’ are the individuals in the genus of substance. Thus, creeping things creep, fish swim, birds fly, etc. Everything that God created had a purpose, and God created different kinds of creatures. Following on from that verse in Genesis, God declares: “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness” (Gen 1:26, NRSV). Thus, we see immediately that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God, what we call the Imago Dei. They are endowed with something more than just the characteristics of other animals, however advanced those animals may be.

Jacques Maritain explained that “Whenever we say that man is a person, we mean that he is more than a mere parcel of matter, more than an individual element in nature, such as is an atom, a blade of grass, a fly or an elephant… Man is an animal and an individual, but unlike other animals or individuals.”56 Whilst explaining the relationship between Aristotle’s matter and form with the occurrence of insight, Lonergan noted that when Aristotle asked ‘What is a man’ he was really asking ‘Why is this a man?’ He identified the ‘more than a mere parcel of matter’ that

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Maritain was speaking about when he replied that “[t]he answer is the soul. It is the soul in this matter that makes it a man. If you had a different kind of soul, you wouldn't have a man.”

Lonergan concluded that: “Soul is what you know by insight into the sensible data. Just as you have insight into sensible data, so there is form in matter. Aristotle's 'matter and form' distinction is tied right in with insight.”

Over time Christianity has affirmed the insight that human beings have both a soul and a rational nature that allows them to be aware not just of themselves, but of their Creator. Aristotle defined man as a rational animal. Thomas D. Williams and Jan Olof Bengtsson argue that “[t]his objective, cosmological view of man as an animal with the distinguishing feature of reason—by which man is primarily an object alongside other objects in the world to which he physically belongs—would be only partly valid, and insufficient.” They propose that “[i]n an effort to interpret the subjectivity that is proper to the person, … a belief in both the non-material dimension and the primordial uniqueness of the human being, and thus in the basic irreducibility of the human being to the natural world” is required. Today we locate that ‘basic irreducibility’ in the recognition of the Imago Dei and our understanding of human

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58 Ibid.

59 The Soul is “the spiritual principle of human beings. The soul is the subject of human consciousness and freedom; soul and body together form one unique human nature. Each human soul is individual and immortal, immediately created by God. The soul does not die with the body, from which it is separated by death, and with which it will be reunited in the final resurrection”. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (hereafter *CCC*), 2nd Ed. ed. (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2000), p 900.


62 Ibid.

63 Ibid.
dignity – but in earlier times it was vested in our rational natures, our ability to be conscious and responsible.

For my purposes, I would just like to observe that in this focus on rational natures, soul and human dignity, all very large debates that occupied great thinkers in the Western Tradition, there is a strong emphasis upon the individual and the person as they appear to themselves. The only ‘communal’ reference that I find is the Scriptural reference to ‘kinds,’64 where human beings are said to be part of humankind, and animals are stated as being according to the various kinds that were created65, and this was again identified by Aquinas above66. This emphasis mainly on individuals, and rather lately and to a lesser extent on relationships and community could be because in Christian theology our understanding of person derives not only from the Hellenistic heritage of Greek Philosophy, with its focus on rational nature, but is informed also by the thought of Ancient Israel and its Hebrew theology. In some sense African culture is similar to the traditional Hebrew culture, with its tribes and small communities, and is consequently concerned with relationships. The ‘belonging-to-a-kind’ recognized a permanence in defining their personhood, that these human beings created *Imago Dei* are persons: one kind could not become another; and with respect to taxonomy, what is true for one instance of a genus or species is true for all other instances of that same genus or species. Thus, all human beings are persons.

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64 See Gen 1:24, NRSV
65 I am indebted to Gilles Mongeau, S.J. of Regis College, Toronto School of Theology, for pointing out to me that within humankind, persons are in relation to each other from the moment man and woman are joined in relationship; and between humankind and animals, when God mandated man to name the animals. His comments reminded me of what Lonergan once said that the “[t]he species may be said to mediate itself by the individuals.” Bernard J. F. Lonergan, “The Mediation of Christ in Prayer,” in *Philosophical and Theological Papers, 1958-1964*, eds. Robert C. Croken, Frederick E. Crowe, and Robert M. Doran, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan (Toronto: Lonergan Research Institute, Regis College/University of Toronto Press, 1996), 168.
66 Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I q.29 a.21 resp.
There has thus been a shift in the understanding of persons from possessing certain capabilities or characteristics (what some call Empirical Functional Personalism) to us recognizing an inherent dignity\(^{67}\) that makes their personhood inalienable (an ontological personalism) because it is linked to their very being. In the past there was talk of substance\(^{68}\), now personhood is linked with creatures that possess both a soul and a body, i.e. persons. The question I find with Empirical Functional Personalism, and why I prefer Ontological Personalism, is what would happen if persons ceased to possess one or other of those eligible characteristics – would that make them so much less as to no longer be a person? For example, one might be satisfied that a person possessed, not just a function to which end a rôle was performed and therefore a *telos* was fulfilled, but also a nature that was rational and was conscious. In terms of consciousness, it was not just that a person was conscious (in the sense of aware of stimuli in their environment) but that the person was also capable of being self-conscious, i.e. aware of their own awareness, and potentially able to become aware of the Divine Creator. This form of consciousness is what Bernard Lonergan called ‘being present to oneself’. We could satisfactorily call individuals who possess these characteristics persons. But does that mean that if they cease to possess these characteristics we must stop calling them persons? For example, what happens if they cease to be present, or attentive to themselves permanently? When they are brain-dead?\(^{69}\) Some might call

\(^{67}\) “Dignity refers to the inherent value of the person, as a ‘someone’ and not merely ‘something,’ and this confers an absoluteness not found in other beings. Here classical-realist personalists reject the Hobbesian notion of dignity as the price set on an individual by the commonwealth, and ally themselves rather with Kant in his assertion that dignity is inherent and sets itself beyond all price.” See Williams and Bengtsson, "Personalism.", 1.

\(^{68}\) Use of ‘transsubstantiatis’ in Canon 1 of the Fourth Lateran Council. See H.J. Schroeder, Disciplinary Decrees of the General Councils: Text, Translation, and Commentary (St. Louis, MO; London 1937) 237-239.

\(^{69}\) I believe, for fairly cogent reasons, that it is at conception – but I recognize that others might disagree with me. My point here is really to affirm that a person is always a person and that ontologically one never ceases to be a person.
them ‘vegetables’. Or even if the being conscious is only temporarily suspended as when one falls asleep or is put under a general anaesthetic? It cannot be a satisfactory answer that one loses one’s personhood in these circumstances. The value of personhood is surely that it is permanent and persists. One cannot cease to be a person any more than one can cease to be a human being. Of course, some actions can be described as ‘inhuman’, but one cannot be what one is not. Whilst there seems, in today’s age a tendency towards ontological personalism, i.e. one cannot cease to be a person, there are still debates in our modern era over the exact moment that personhood begins, some arguing that it is at conception, others at birth.

2.4 Other views on the Human Person?

Joseph Ratzinger explains that “[o]ver the centuries, various aspects of what it is to be a person were explicated or added: relationship, incommunicability, self-consciousness, freedom, duties, inalienable rights, and dignity. For Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), the human person is an absolute that may never be used as a means, but must always be respected as a moral end-in-itself. Today, to overcome the notion of persons as autonomous selves, some stress the way persons are always persons-in-relationship, constituted through relations with other persons and the environment.”71 One of the primary relationships for persons is that which exists with their community.

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70 A derogatory categorization that appears to be even less than that of other living creatures, like animals. In medicine, they make a distinction between persistent and permanent vegetative states. In the former, persons have consciousness for a long time, but there is a possibility of coming out of a coma. After a period of time, it is considered permanent and there is no chance of coming out of this state. This is distinguished for the issue of brain-death, when the brain ceases to function, and the body can only be maintained by artificial means.

One way of defining persons is by considering that they alone are subjects who possess subjectivity. Williams and Bengtsson note that subjectivity depends primarily on the unity of self-consciousness, and on interiority (a conscious self-presence), freedom, and personal autonomy.\(^{72}\)

I would maintain that an essential part of any definition of being a person must include that persons are able to relate or be related to by others.\(^{73}\) As mentioned in the previous chapter, the sociologist and critical realist, Christian Smith,\(^{74}\) who expanded upon the OED’s simple ‘conscious or rational’ modifier of persons, recently suggested that a person is:

> a conscious, reflexive, embodied, self-transcending center 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 inter-subjectivity in order to develop and sustain his or her own incommunicable self in loving relationships with other personal selves and with the non-personal world.\(^{75}\)

Christian Smith argues for thirty different features that any person will possess. I am interested in the telos of his definition, contained in his ‘in order to’, i.e. the area of the interplay between inter-subjectivity and the development and sustenance of the individual person in relationships, which he qualifies as ‘loving’. Christian Smith is drawing on the insights of a long tradition and explicitly incorporating the aspect of relationship here.

With this in mind, I would note that the Catholic Church defines person, not just in the way that the Western Tradition has tended to, but includes the telos towards relationship and communion

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\(^{72}\) Williams and Bengtsson, "Personalism," op. cit.

\(^{73}\) I say ‘or be related to by others’ so that particular cases, such as a fœtus or a person with alzheimers who has lost their ‘reason’ might not lose their personhood.

\(^{74}\) Christian Smith is the William R. Kenan, Jr., Professor of Sociology, director of the Center for the Study of Religion and Society, and director of the Center for Social Research at the University of Notre Dame.

\(^{75}\) Smith, *What Is a Person?*, 61. The italics are mine.
(the very definition of love in relationship must be Christ’s sacrifice for us and the very gift of Himself in communion). The Catechism defines the human person with these words:

The human individual, made in the image of God; not some thing but some one, a unity of spirit and matter, soul and body, capable of knowledge, self-possession, and freedom, who can enter into communion with other persons—and with God. The human person needs to live in society, which is a group of persons bound together organically by a principle of unity that goes beyond each one of them.\textsuperscript{76}

On the basis of this principle of unity that forms society, persons can thus go out of themselves and relate to themselves and to others and to God—who is the source of love and relationship since God calls forth all creation into being and relationship. The forming of relationships is central to a person’s development. These may exist in individuals of other species, but they are particularly relevant to persons since groups of persons in relationship to each other form families and societies.

The foregoing is confirmed by Balthasar who recalls Jacques Maritain’s principle: “The individual exists for the society, but the society exists for the person.” He argues for the sake of clarity that one must distinguish between the individual and the person in order to see that then a special dignity is ascribed to the person, which the individual as such does not possess.\textsuperscript{77} He concludes that “no one can be a person except on the basis of individuality. Yet the word individuality, which means the quality of not being broken into parts, always includes an element of singularity that, at least potentially, contains something of personality.”\textsuperscript{78} To put this Balthasarian distinction another way, “[t]he major distinction is that an \textit{individual} represents a

\textsuperscript{76} CCC, p. 893.
\textsuperscript{77} von Balthasar, "On the Concept of Person," 18.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
single unit in a homogenous set, interchangeable with any other member of the set, whereas a person is characterized by his uniqueness and irreplaceability.”79 Williams and Bengtsson note that Balthasar says “Few words have as many layers of meaning as person. On the surface it means just any human being, any countable individual. Its deeper senses, however, point to the individual’s uniqueness which cannot be interchanged and therefore cannot be counted.”80 Williams and Bengtsson explain this inability to be interchanged and counted in this way:

In this deeper sense persons cannot, properly speaking, be counted, because a single person is not merely one in a series within which each member is identical to the rest for all practical purposes and thus exchangeable for any other. One can count apples, because one apple is as good as another (i.e., what matters is not that it is this apple, but simply that it is an apple), but one cannot count persons in this way. One could count human beings, as individuals of the same species, but the word person emphasizes the uniqueness of each member of the human species, his incommensurability and incommunicability.81

Defining persons as subjects possessed of subjectivity, as someone rather than something, as being incommensurable and unique and consequently infinitely worth knowing and with the ability to relate surmounts the earlier objection in the case of a brain-dead person, since even the brain-dead person is still in a relationship, if not with others, then undeniably always with God.82

So, it is still true to say that the person possesses a telos, and a rational nature. This is all in reference to an individual person. It is my contention, however, that in order fully to realize one’s telos, and to exercise fully one’s rational nature, a person would need to exist in a community that protected and promoted the flourishing of its members. Part of the environment in which a person consciously lives must surely include their relationships with other people.

79 Williams and Bengtsson, "Personalism," op. cit.
81 See Williams and Bengtsson, "Personalism." 1.
82 This is predicated on a theistic position of a God who exists and desires to relate with us.
Starting from the relationship of a person with their immediate family and continuing on to that of their own extended family and the community, a person is most fully a person when they are in relationship. In today’s Church we speak of a person being in right-relationship with themselves, with each other and with God. The right-relationship with others is precisely what makes others into a community. Where there is discord and disagreement there is a disunity, not a common-unity or community. Societies that are not comprised of healthy communities become dysfunctional, whereas where there are healthy and peaceful communities there is always a happy and thriving society and nation. The quality of individual relationships reflects the quality of personhood individuals enjoy, and this impacts upon everyone.

This insight, seemingly assumed and undeveloped in Western tradition is explicitly required in the African understanding of persons, as encapsulated in the contribution of *Ubuntu* which stresses that one’s humanity – here understood as personhood – is available only when the individual person recognizes it in the other person as another person. This recognition we must assume entails the acceptance of a relationship of one person to another.

Having explored a Tradition that increasingly privileges in its understanding the individual person over the community, I would now like to consider that each person offers an understanding of him/herself and so helps other persons understand themselves, and in so doing, helps communities appreciate their members because in and through this understanding of self and others, relationships are formed. An expansion of this point follows with Bernard Lonergan as the primary interlocutor.
2.5 How Lonergan’s Cognitional Theory contributes to the understanding of a Human Person

I would assert that Persons, who possess a rational nature, are capable of consciously becoming aware of their (and our) own conscious and intentional operations. I propose to explore this self-understanding through Lonergan’s Cognitional Theory, which comprehensively treats the process of ‘understanding’ as part of his quartet of ‘experiencing, understanding, judging and deciding’.\textsuperscript{83} I believe that Lonergan’s contributions to understanding as a process prior to making judgements of fact or value are helpful in our broader discussion on understanding Human Persons.

Lonergan’s Cognitional Theory is described in his book \textit{Method in Theology}\textsuperscript{84}. In the first part of his book Lonergan outlines his Transcendental Method, which “supplies the basic anthropological component”\textsuperscript{85} that, when added to his consideration of the human good, human meaning and religion, forms his theological method. If we accept that persons are conscious and have a rational nature, we can accept that their rational nature is capable of perceiving itself, in processes that we call self-reflection that lead to self-awareness. Lonergan’s insight was that this occurred on different levels. He proposed that awareness at different levels of one’s consciousness would lead to conversion and transcendence. He formulated four\textsuperscript{86} transcendental imperatives – Be Attentive; Be Intelligent; Be Reasonable; Be Responsible – which

\textsuperscript{83} More fully explored in Chapter 4 of this thesis. See also Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 13-20.
\textsuperscript{84} See ibid.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 25.
\textsuperscript{86} Lonergan also postulated a fifth transcendental (Be-in-Love) which will be discussed in Chapter 4.
corresponded to his insight into the operations of Experiencing, Understanding, Judging and Deciding.\textsuperscript{87}

In talking about persons becoming aware and conscious Lonergan spoke of subjects being present to themselves in such a way that the subject experiences him/herself operating.\textsuperscript{88} This operation “which besides being intrinsically intentional, is [also] intrinsically conscious.”\textsuperscript{89} He described his transcendental method as “a heightening of consciousness that brings to light our conscious and intentional operations and thereby leads to the answers to the three basic questions. ”\textsuperscript{90} Firstly, what am I doing when I am knowing? Secondly, why is doing that knowing? and thirdly, what do I know when I do it? His first answer is a cognitional theory, his second is an epistemology, and his third is a metaphysics. For our purposes, we are concerned here with his cognitional theory – which answers the question ‘what am I doing when I am knowing?’

Lonergan begins with defining method as “a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results”\textsuperscript{91} He notes that these operations include the logical operations of “describing, of formulating problems and hypotheses, of deducing implications”\textsuperscript{92} and also the nonlogical ones of “inquiry, observation, discovery, experiment, synthesis, [and] verification”\textsuperscript{93} He explains that “the logical tend to consolidate what has been

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\item[87] Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 20.
\item[88] Ibid., 8.
\item[89] Ibid.
\item[90] Ibid., 25.
\item[91] Ibid., 5.
\item[92] Ibid., 6.
\item[93] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
achieved [whereas] the nonlogical keep all achievement open to further advance. The conjunction of the two results in an open, ongoing, progressive and cumulative process.” He remarks that this process “contrasts sharply … with the static fixity that resulted from Aristotle’s concentration on the necessary and immutable.”94 This allows his method to be cumulative and progressive in its outcome. I will briefly outline his method in the next seven paragraphs.

Lonergan explains that the operations in the normative pattern that recur and relate to each other are “seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting, inquiring, imagining, understanding, conceiving, formulating, reflecting, marshaling and weighing the evidence, judging, deliberating, evaluating, deciding, speaking, writing.”95 We can see that understanding is eighth in his list of operations, and that these operations are an expansion of his Experiencing, Understanding, Judging and Deciding ‘formula’.

For each of these operations he makes eight points. I will consider five of these points in relation to the operation I am concerned about here, understanding. This understanding comes after one has experienced and been attentive to that experience and is in the process of being intelligent with the data one has attended to.

He first notes that understanding is transitive, that is, it possesses an object. This transitivity is not just grammatical but also psychological. This means that by understanding there becomes present what is understood. He notes that “the presence in question is a psychological event”, which is I believe his way of saying that one becomes aware of its presence.

94 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
Secondly, he notes that these operations are operations of an operator who is named as subject, again in a grammatical and psychological manner. He explains that “[t]he operator is subject not merely in the grammatical sense that he is denoted by a noun that is subject of the verbs that in the active voice refer to the operations”\(^96\), but that “[h]e also is subject in the psychological sense that he operates consciously.”\(^97\) Thus one cannot understand while one is asleep or in a coma. One can only understand whilst conscious. The subject is aware of himself understanding, present to himself understanding, experiencing himself understanding. Lonergan notes that the “quality of consciousness changes as the subject performs different operations.”\(^98\) He explains that the operations thus not only intend objects, but occur consciously and by them the operating subject is conscious. He says, “Just as operations by their intentionality make objects present to the subject, so also by consciousness they make the operating subject present to himself.”\(^99\) Thus the subject can be conscious, as understanding, and yet give his whole attention to the object as being understood.

Thirdly, Lonergan believed that inward inspection is mythical. He explained that introspection may “be understood to mean, not consciousness itself but the process of objectifying the contents of consciousness.”\(^100\) This process is active and requires one to be attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible – the recommended precepts Lonergan has already suggested.

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\(^{96}\) Ibid., 7-8.
\(^{97}\) Ibid.
\(^{98}\) Ibid.
\(^{99}\) Ibid.
\(^{100}\) Ibid.
Fourthly, he distinguished between different levels of consciousness and intentionality. He identifies “the empirical level on which we sense, perceive, imagine, feel, speak, move”\(^\text{101}\); “the intellectual level on which we inquire, come to understand, express what we have understood, work out the presuppositions and implications of our expression”\(^\text{102}\); “the rational level on which we reflect, marshal the evidence, pass judgement on the truth or falsity, certainty of probability of a statement”\(^\text{103}\); and “the responsible level on which we are concerned with ourselves, our own operations, our goals, and so deliberate about possible courses of action, evaluate them, decide, and carry out our decisions.”\(^\text{104}\) He explains that “all the operations on these four levels are intentional and conscious” but “intentionality and consciousness differ from level to level, and within each level the many operations involve further differences”\(^\text{105}\) Whilst there are differences, and successive stages of consciousness, Lonergan sees them as an “unfolding of a single thrust, the eros of the human spirit”\(^\text{106}\) He declares “to know the good, it must know the real; to know the real, it must know the true; to know the true, it must know the intelligible; to know the intelligible, it must attend to the data.”\(^\text{107}\) Again, we see a repetition of these imperatives, Be Attentive, Be Intelligent, Be Reasonable, Be Responsible.

Finally, Lonergan explains how because persons are conscious of themselves this allows all of us to become more intentionally conscious. By explicitly identifying the pattern of operations that are enacted when we become present to ourselves and are conscious, we are able to be conscious.

\(^{101}\) Ibid., 9.  
\(^{102}\) Ibid.  
\(^{103}\) Ibid.  
\(^{104}\) Ibid.  
\(^{105}\) Ibid.  
\(^{106}\) Ibid., 13.  
\(^{107}\) Ibid.
in a more intentional manner, and thus achieve a great conscious presence-to-ourselves than if we were not as intentional or conscious of our behaviour.

In summary then, and in terms of understanding persons, the starting point Lonergan argues is to begin with oneself. By recognizing that this cognitional theory is present in oneself and in the relationships and operations one engages in, one can come to understand oneself in a deeper and more profound way. With this deeper understanding, one can communicate oneself in relationships to others in a more authentic and real manner. This enhances the relationship, and thus contributes to a fuller realization of the potential of each person. We are left with a paradox then that in order to encounter the other we must first know ourselves, yet we know that we can only truly know ourselves when we come to know others. Whether this be in larger society, broader community, within families or between friends or those we love, it is in our relating and our relationships that we grow into personhood and recognize ourselves as persons.

Having explored human persons and how they can understand themselves, I now turn to consider Divine Persons.

2.6 How has the Divine Person been understood in the Western Tradition?

The concept of ‘Divine Person’ is understood in a particular way in the Western Christian tradition and is particularly peculiar to Christian thought. Jesus Christ, who is the Second Person of the Trinity who became incarnate and took on a human nature, was both fully human and divine\textsuperscript{108}. Pope Leo I affirmed that Jesus Christ is one person of the divine Trinity with two

\textsuperscript{108} I am indebted to Joseph L. Mangina of Wycliffe College, Toronto School of Theology, for reminding me of Cyril of Alexandria’s insistence on the priority of the person of Christ over his natures.
distinct natures. This view was confirmed by the Council of Chalcedon which rejected the opposing heresies of Apollinarianism, Nestorianism and Eutychianism. Jesus Christ’s human nature is identical with the rational nature we have discussed above. It is only that in addition to the rational human nature he possesses – by virtue of Him being the Son of God – a divine nature. In this way, we can see that Christ is a human person who really existed and had real relationships and experienced everything else that any other human person would really experience – except for sin. Through His Divine nature, however, he is a member of the Trinity. This insight into the Triune God was not immediately apparent through the Hebrew Bible but was gradually articulated as the Church reflected on the experience of Jesus Christ, and his relationship with Father and the Spirit, whom he promised to send. In terms of its use theologically, Joseph Ratzinger recalled that it was Tertullian who was the first to categorize God as Trinity systematically and to hypothesize God’s existence as three persons (tres personae) of one substance. Meeks remarks that Tertullian was “writing in response to Marcion and modalist monarchians (who saw the Son and the Spirit as alternate “modes” of existence of the one Father, and not as distinct persons)” , who was the first to categorize God as Trinity systematically and to hypothesize God’s existence as three persons (tres personae) of

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109 Brown notes that “[i]n this work Tertullian means substantia not in its metaphysical but its legal sense. Substance is property and the right that a person has to make use of it. In the context of the principate, for example, the substance of the emperor was the empire. His right over this property is what makes it possible for the emperor to share his substance with his son or rightly designated heir, somewhat simple inheritance law under the Roman system. Persona, as a result, is to be understood as “legal person” rather than in its philosophical or commonly accepted sense. A legal person is one who owns or controls a certain substance. Under Roman law, it was possible for several persons to share the same substance, as it was also possible for one person to have more than one substance, and this forms the core of Tertullian’s doctrine regarding both the Trinity and the person of Christ.” See Michael Joseph Brown, The Lord’s Prayer through North African Eyes: A Window into Early Christianity (hereafter The Lord’s Prayer through North African Eyes) (London & New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 222.

one substance and who “gave to the West its formula for expressing the Christian idea of God”\textsuperscript{111} in saying there is only one substance in three coherent and inseparable persons\textsuperscript{112}, that God is \textit{una substantia—tres personae}, one Being in three Persons\textsuperscript{113}. Thus, whereas Jesus Christ is one person with two natures, God is one Being in three Persons, one of whom is the Son, Jesus Christ. These three Persons are really three relations, as I mentioned above, of paternity, filiation, and spiration, relations that are inseparable from God-self since God is constituted in these three divine persons, which we call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We believe that God is one and that there are only three distinct Divine Persons in God in their relating to each other and ourselves.

One of the important features of this idea of person, Ratzinger notes, is that “the idea of person expresses in its origin the idea of dialogue and the idea of God as the dialogical being. It refers to God as the being that lives in the word and consists of the word as ‘I’ and ‘you’ and ‘we’. In the light of this knowledge of God, the true nature of humanity became clear in a new way.”\textsuperscript{114} Dialogue occurs, of course, between Persons. It is clear that dialogue need not only occur between persons theologically understood, but also sensibly understood.

\textsuperscript{111} Ratzinger, "Concerning the Notion of Person in Theology," 440.
\textsuperscript{114} Ratzinger, "Concerning the Notion of Person in Theology," 443.
2.7 Can ‘Divine Person’ be commonly understood?

We have already noted that the word person comes from the Latin persona, and also how Aquinas explained this.\(^{115}\) Primarily Boethius (ca. 480–ca. 524) had classically defined a person as “\textit{rationalis naturae individua substantia.}”\(^{116}\) O’Collins and Farrugia note that when this understanding is applied to the Trinity, this definition might imply \textit{three} centers of reason, “thus conflicting with orthodox belief of one reason held in common by the three divine persons.”\(^ {117}\) Can we thus use the term person in talking about God? Aquinas moves from the common usage understanding to the theological when considering whether the term can belong to God. He notes that

\[\text{[a]though this name \textit{person} may not belong to God as regards the origin of the term, nevertheless it excellently belongs to God in its objective meaning. For as famous men were represented in comedies and tragedies, the name \textit{person} was given to signify those who held high dignity. Hence, those who held high rank in the Church came to be called \textit{persons}. Thence by some, the definition of person is given as \textit{hypostasis distinct by reason of dignity}. And because subsistence in a rational nature is of high dignity, therefore every individual of the rational nature is called a \textit{person}. Now the dignity of the divine nature excels every other dignity; and thus the name \textit{person} pre-eminently belongs to God.}\(^ {118}\]

2.8 ‘Person’ as relation

Ratzinger describes Augustine’s contribution to the debate that “the three persons that exist in God are in their nature relations. They are, therefore, not substances that stand next to each other, but they are real existing relations, and nothing besides.”\(^{119}\) Ratzinger affirms that “In God,

\(^{115}\) O’Collins and Farrugia, \textit{A Concise Dictionary of Theology}, 194-195.
\(^{116}\) Latin for “an individual substance of rational nature”.
\(^{117}\) O’Collins and Farrugia, \textit{A Concise Dictionary of Theology}, 194-195.
\(^{118}\) Aquinas, \textit{Summa Theologica}, I, q. 29 a. 23 ad. 22.
\(^{119}\) Ratzinger, "Concerning the Notion of Person in Theology," 444.
person means relation”\textsuperscript{120} and notes how Augustine has added ‘relation’ to the two previous categories of ‘substance’ and ‘accident’.

Therefore, we can conclude that when talking about Divine Persons, we are meaning Divine Relations. Therefore, returning to our understanding of Human Persons, it is not possible to remove the Hebraic contribution of relationship and to rely solely on the Hellenistic formulation of rational natures for our definition of persons. We clearly need both. African culture, and in particular \textit{Ubuntu}, provide a needed reminder that relationship, and what results from relationship, namely communities, cannot be ignored. An approach that is purely individual cannot be adequate. Theologically, we see the \textit{Imago Dei} and must be reminded of the \textit{Imago Trinitatis}, i.e. God as relationship in the community of the Trinity, three divine persons in love with each other and the world. I will now see how we can apply Lonergan’s understanding of the Divine persons to my argument.

\section*{2.9 Lonergan’s Understanding of the Trinity of Divine Persons}

The Trinity is a Community of three Divine Persons and as Lonergan notes, “the three Persons are the perfect community, … three subjects of a single, dynamic, existential consciousness”\textsuperscript{121} who share common understanding, judgement and commitment. At the end of Lonergan’s cognitional theory is a commitment or decision that is grounded in Love. We have already affirmed that Jesus Christ, in virtue of his rational human nature, would have taken decisions and become conscious as any other human being would become conscious. However, his

\begin{footnotes}
\item[120] Ibid.
\item[121] Lonergan, "The Dehellenization of Dogma," 25.
\end{footnotes}
consciousness is shared with his Divine Nature, which affords him a divine experience that can be divinely understood, where God makes divine judgements and divine decisions. The obvious decision that comes to mind is – apart from the work of creation – the salvific work of the Son. This was an act of love. It is impossible for humans to know the will of God *in toto*, but if we are made in His image and likeness, then we can assume that our way of operating, at our best and most grace-filled moments, still follows that pattern of operations that Lonergan proposes. Consequently, this human pattern of operations must be an image and likeness of God’s divine operations – though we can never know the extent of the perfection. God’s omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence would surely mean that God operates out of love, thus guaranteeing the right ordering and maximal effect of all the operations that lead to love – since God is the source of love. Lonergan’s theory is not meant to be applied to the Divine nature, but it is helpful in an analogous way in explaining how one could imagine one operating. Because God knows God-self perfectly, and has perfect understanding, and right judgement, God can love perfectly.

2.10 Conclusion: The Divine Life of the Trinity as a model for the Communitarian Life of Human Persons

I have argued that the Divine Life of the Trinity, as a community of love, and consisting of pure relations and relationships of love is the de facto model on which human persons can base their own lives in community. In the next chapter I shall consider how *Ubuntu* contributes to my argument particularly by understanding the way human persons and community are in relationship. This understanding can be measured by a standard of love, how loving is the reality of this relationship, and therefore how in conformity with the Trinity is it. Is there the potential for an imitation of Trinitarian love? In communities that ignore the harmony of loving
relationships and proceed in a way where persons are used and not respected this clearly runs
counter to the dignity, infinite value and irreplaceable worth of a human person and results not in
a flourishing, loving community, but rather the diminishment of individual persons and the
disintegration of the community
Chapter 3 How *Ubuntu* contributes to Theology and in particular to the understanding of Humanity and Community being in relationship

3.1 Introduction

In the first place, we must ask what is it that makes persons in community a community? Not only are persons related in some way, nor do they just engage in a common task or project, but they have some affection towards the other. Secondly, the African concept of *Ubuntu* stresses the communitarian and inter-subjective nature of this anthropological understanding of the human person. In addition, life, the creation of life, the enjoyment of life, giving the gift of life, comes from the Divine Persons – and is the reason for the Community’s existence. Thus, I would conclude that in African Theology, life and fertility are celebrated by the community. Persons cannot exist except in relation to the Community. They are either in or out of Community, but always in a relationship to the Community.

In the previous chapter I examined the human person in the Western Tradition, and noted how as the Western Tradition advanced, the individual understanding of person was privileged over the person in community, and the importance of their relationships, which was influenced by the Hebraic traditions. The Christian understanding of the human person owes its genus to both the Western and Hebraic traditions. Nicolson notes that “the tradition of European ethics has two main roots, a Greek root and a biblical root. The Greek root is the idea of *physis*, nature. To act
morally is to act in conformity with our nature.”  

In the previous chapter we saw how our “human nature is defined by genus and species: we are members of the animal genus and our specific difference is reason – we are rational animals. So, to live in accordance with our nature is to live in accordance with reason.” Nicolson proceeds to explain the connection between exercising our minds as well as all our other powers to develop virtues. He describes how this Hellenistic influence imagined persons living in a well-functioning small city-state. Nicolson explains that “social harmony is necessary for a happy life, but it is only possible if the individuals who make up the state and govern it have themselves achieved an inner integration through the cultivation of virtues.” But the Hebraic or Biblical tradition, Nicolson argues, does not locate achievement of human ends in a well-functioning city-state, but rather in the creation of a city in which all of humanity may belong, may build a home and be part of the people of God.

It is these two traditions that enabled Christianity to be inculcated into their respective cultures and later into other cultures. In an age where the African Church is beginning to take root, I believe that the wisdom of the African Tradition has similar insights to those of the Hebraic tradition, and can therefore be used to support the Christian understanding of the human person. Michael Battle, a former assistant to Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Assistant Professor of Spiritual and Moral Theology at the University of the South in the United States, notes that Tutu

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123 Ibid.
124 Ibid., 18.
125 A measure of the establishment of Christianity in various Sub-Saharan African countries can be seen in Kenneth R. Ross, J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu & Todd M. Johnson (eds.) *Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017).
publicly declared his affinity for the Old Testament, arguing that to “claim that there were no religious truths or values in Africa before the Christian era is in effect to say that only in this continent [Africa] did God remain utterly unknown.”  

Battle explains how Tutu concludes that “the biblical world was more congenial for the African worldview than for its Western counterpart … because of … Ubuntu, an understanding of community unique to South Africa.”  

Battle notes that Tutu is arguing for a balance between the two poles of zero and absolute individualism when he quotes Tutu saying “this strong group feeling [Ubuntu] has the weaknesses of all communalism; it encourages conservation and conformity. It needs to be corrected by the teaching about [each individual’s] inalienable uniqueness… We need both aspects to balance each other.”  

I believe the balanced position is the true Christian understanding of the human person, whereby individuality is stressed, but our communal relationships and responsibilities are not neglected. We cannot conceive of ourselves as being wholly self-sufficient and self-constituted for we are always dependent upon God’s grace and as God’s creatures in receipt of the sheer gift of God’s love that animates and calls us into being.

### 3.2 What makes a community?

When one typically talks of a community one might see it as part of a larger society or a civilization. One model of human grouping might be:

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127 Ibid.
128 Ibid.
Each of these could be constituted with some hierarchy and person in charge who can influence
to greater or lesser degrees the other members. Bernard Lonergan notes, however, that “a community is not just a number of men within a geographical frontier” but argues that “it is an achievement of common meaning, and there are kinds and degrees of achievement.” He explains the potential, formal and actual forms of common meaning as existing when there is common experience, common understanding and common judgements. He explains that “community coheres or divides, begins or ends, just where the common field of experience, common understanding, common judgement, common commitments, begin and end.” He imagines communities of different kinds, “linguistic, religious, cultural, social, political and domestic”. In this sense diverse communities cohere at a level that is closer than the larger units of societies and nations – but not as close as a friend, a couple or a family might be. Bernard Lonergan believes communities to be inter-subjective, i.e. related to subjects. As I explain Ubuntu, I will show how the perceived common experience of Africans in their shared worldview, that includes Ubuntu and a respect for life, leads them to a common understanding of humanity, Ubuntu, that honours what Christians call the image of God in the other person. This leads them to a common judgement on the importance of maintaining and furthering relationships and of the overarching importance of life to the community.

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129 Lonergan, Method, 79.
130 Ibid.
131 Lonergan et al., Insight, 237.
3.3 *Ubuntu* as a political and a theological concept

In his work on Desmond Tutu’s understanding of *Ubuntu*, Battle explains the political context Tutu, and all South Africans, faced with apartheid. He lists three theologies that were competing during Apartheid: “the powerful and entrenched Afrikaner theology of separation, the mediation theology of Anglicanism, and the persistent and explosive theology of African liberation.”¹³²

Battle explains that “these three theologies provide a context for understanding the reason that Tutu adheres to *Ubuntu*, which appeals to the peaceful cohabitation of African, British, and Afrikaner identities”¹³³ and consequently only “the life-giving symbiosis of *Ubuntu* can form correct political responses within the integrity of Christian commitments.”¹³⁴ The ‘correct political response’ taken by South Africa in order to create a community that allowed ‘the peaceful cohabitation’ of her people was its new Constitution that has *Ubuntu* as an underlying value.

Since persons and communities can be spoken of in both political and ecclesial terms, of citizens and parties, and also of congregants and pastors, churches and denominations, it is important to see how the African concept of community is used politically and religiously. Given how religion was misused during apartheid to support a political reality from a (flawed) theological worldview¹³⁵, the solution to apartheid could not only be a political solution but had to be drawn

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¹³² Battle, *Reconciliation*, xv.
¹³³ Ibid.
¹³⁴ Ibid.
from values that were also theological. Tutu believed that apartheid made no theological sense “because it denies that human beings are created in the image of God.”\textsuperscript{136} This is where the concept of \textit{Ubuntu} was able to bridge both the political and theological realms. Battle explains that \textit{Ubuntu} for Tutu “provide[d] a corrective hermeneutic for Western salvation theology that focuses on the individual. … Tutu’s theological model – namely, an emphasis on the integrity of creation and the habitual recalling of our image of God (\textit{Imago Dei}) in the midst of human conflict.”\textsuperscript{137} In the context of the politically divided society of South Africa, Battle notes that “Tutu’s theological model seeks to restore the oppressor’s humanity by releasing and enabling the oppressed to see their oppressors as peers under God. This can be a mutual understanding, as Jesus teaches, through friendship (John 15:15).”\textsuperscript{138} This ‘mutuality’ is expressed for Tutu, in \textit{Ubuntu}. This mutual understanding is grounded in the recognition that all human persons are created in the image and likeness of God, and thus there is an appeal to something greater than ourselves.

Battle offers a definition of \textit{Ubuntu} from Tutu’s work:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Ubuntu} is the plural form of the African word Bantu, coined by Wilhelm Bleek to identify a similar linguistic bond among African speakers. \textit{Ubuntu} means ‘humanity’ and is related both to \textit{umuntu}, which is the category of intelligent human force that includes spirits, the human dead, and the living, and to \textit{ntu}, which is God’s being as metadynamic (active rather than metaphysical).\textsuperscript{139}
\end{quote}

It is clear from the etymology described above that the African understanding of the human person includes the full breadth of humanity as Africans see it, i.e. the spirits, and all humanity, living and dead, as well as God-self. Tutu noted that “in the African \textit{Weltanschauung}, a person is

\begin{footnotes}
\item[136] Battle, \textit{Reconciliation}, 5.
\item[137] Ibid., 4-5.
\item[138] Ibid., 5.
\item[139] Ibid., 39.
\end{footnotes}
not basically an independent solitary entity. A person is human precisely by being enveloped in
the community of other human beings, in being caught up in the bundle of life. To be is to
participate. The *summum bonum* here is not independence but sharing, interdependence. And
what is true of the human person is surely true of human aggregations.”\(^{140}\) Here Tutu is affirming
not only the importance of interdependence but also the importance of life to the concept of
Ubuntu. To be a human person is to be alive to relationship, not only with God, but with all of
creation. This is what the breadth of Africa’s recognition of the created entails: not only living
humans, but those passed on to the afterlife and referred to as Ancestors – all are still in
relationship, the dead to the living, and so life is the central value in an African worldview. This
has echoes of St Irenaeus’ dictum: “The glory of God is man fully alive, and the life of man is
the vision of God.”\(^{141}\) It is my contention that in recognizing the *Imago Dei* in each other we not
only come to recognize the other as God intended us to see them, but our vision of God becomes
deeper and clearer as we recognize the relationship and the life that it affirms, sustains and
fulfills.

Monsignor Philippe Delhaye, one-time Secretary General of the International Theological
Commission, in a reflection on the text from Irenaeus, concluded that “the life of the Christian,
in faith as in future vision, is essentially knowing and being known. … The disciple of Jesus is

\(^{140}\) Ibid. Italics are my own.

Centuries: The Twelve Patriarchs, Excerpts and Epistles, the Clementina, Apocrypha, Decretals, Memoirs of
Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1886), Book IV, Chapter XX, 490.
not an isolated being. In order to exist, in order to act, he must know the Christ and his Father and be known by them.”

This being known is the result of an inevitable relationship and participation in a community. The Western understanding of the human person privileges individual persons – with all their autonomy and rights – over a community, revealing an emphasis on a Hellenistic approach that neglects the Christian theological fusion of Hellenism with ancient Hebraic theology. It is, as I will explain, the contribution of Hebraic Theology, that promoted a sense of community in the Christian understanding of persons. First, however, I need to outline the theology of Ubuntu.

3.4 The Theology of Ubuntu

Battle outlines four vectors in Ubuntu theology as espoused by Tutu. “First, this theology builds up true, interdependent community. Second, it recognizes persons as distinctive in their identities. Third, it combines the best of European and African cultures to produce a new and distinctive theology. And fourth, it is strong enough to address – even overthrow – apartheid.”

Tutu argues that where apartheid sought to separate peoples, Ubuntu seeks to unite them in fellowship held together through vulnerable relationships that reveal how our humanity is bound up in the humanity of others. One of the defining features of a person participating in a community inspired by Ubuntu is the lack of competition. Tutu saw that in “human systems that

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143 Battle, Reconciliation, 40.
144 Ibid., 41.
encourage a high degree of competitiveness and selfishness [they] demonstrate the greatest discrepancy – an ‘incommensurate difference’ – from God’s creation of interdependence.\textsuperscript{145}

I have already noted that in proposing \textit{Ubuntu} Tutu was seeking to strike a balance. The risk of radically minimizing individuality in favor of community can be avoided through proper relating. Battle notes that “being properly related in a theological \textit{Ubuntu} does not denigrate individuality. Instead it builds an interdependent community.”\textsuperscript{146}

The second vector was recognizing persons as distinctive. Battle notes that “\textit{Ubuntu} theology asserts that persons are ends in themselves only through the discovery of who they are in others. For example, one cannot recognize one’s own physical beauty unless another person is present who can reveal or reflect that beauty. Or, again, if human beings were to grow up individually among wolves, then they would not know how to communicate as human beings. They would not know human ways of eating, sitting, and walking. Therefore, humans become persons only by living in an environment where there is the interaction of diverse personalities and cultures.”\textsuperscript{147}

Tutu believes that “personhood is formed ultimately through the church as the church witnesses to the world that God is the one who loves human identities into being.”\textsuperscript{148} We know that when we view the world through the eyes of love, we see a different, a better, world than if we are jaded. Tutu notes that “God does not love us because we are lovable, but we are lovable precisely because God loves us. God’s love is what gives us our worth.”\textsuperscript{149} Christians recognize

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 42. \\
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., 43-44. \\
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., 44. \\
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., 45.
\end{flushleft}
that worth as the inherent dignity contained in each person because of the presence of the *Imago Dei*. Reflecting on the *Imago Dei*, Battle notes that “just as the Son and the Holy Spirit are defined by the Father, so is personhood defined in the other. One would not know the meaning of salvation or intelligence unless such meanings were made intelligible by the reference of someone else.”

The interdependence of *Ubuntu* here is not just operative in the communities, but Tutu argues, it is present at the ‘macro level’ when he says, “not even the most powerful nations in the world can be self-sufficient.” So at whichever scale, the common value of *Ubuntu* can operate to reveal more profoundly the *Imago Dei*. Battle concludes that “*Ubuntu* theology is about the achievement of absolute dependence on God and neighbor in such a way that human identity is discovered therein.”

### 3.5 A particular feature of the African understanding of community

We have tried to stress that persons in community are, by virtue of their humanity, related to other humans – indeed it is this that makes them human. Which is to say, if I fail to recognize another’s humanity, I have lost my own. But we have also noted that in African culture,
humanity extends not only to the living, but also to the dead, in the form of Ancestors. How then is that relationship maintained? It can only be maintained by the community.  

Nicolson notes that it was Ifeanyi Menkiti who distinguishes the “African idea of community from ‘an aggregated sum of individuals’. African thought [Menkiti] says, ‘asserts an ontological independence to human society, and moves from society to individuals’, rather than, in the manner of European thought, ‘from individuals to society’.” This African Community is one in which people are “conspiring together, con-spiring in the basic Latin sense, united among themselves even to the very centre of their being.”

Battle notes that within African Philosophy there is “a concept of personality called seriti (plural, diriti), which identifies a life force that makes no distinction between body and soul.” He cites the example of Gabriel Setiloane, a South African theologian, who notes that “the Sotho-Tswana culture [in South Africa], like the Hebrew culture, believes that humanity is irreducibly psychophysical – body-and-soul” and consequently within this milieu “to attack the body is to attack the soul and its culture” Thus, to cause bloodshed is to not only “injure a person’s body-soul but also to damage the community’s seriti, which results in a weakened society.” In African culture, “blood and seriti are connected in such a way that human virtue is passed on from

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153 It is interesting to note that in the Catholic Church we talk of the ‘Communion of Saints’. This is the ‘community’ of holy men and women who are held up as examples because of their lives of exemplary relationship with God.
155 Nicolson, Persons in Community, 27.
156 Ibid., 28.
157 Battle, Reconciliation, 50.
158 Ibid.
generation to generation.” This is the reason why there are many rituals in Africa whose purpose it is to restore a person’s weakened \textit{seriti} so that that weak \textit{seriti} is not passed onto the whole community (which includes “children, cattle, crops and possessions”\textsuperscript{160})

Setiloane’s description is repeated in Nicolson’s treatment, and I include it here. It is as Nicolson admits “clearly metaphorical and poetic” but perhaps this is the best way of describing something that is material and yet immaterial:

The human person is like a live electric wire, which is ever exuding force or energy in all directions. The force that is thus exuded is called \textit{seriti}. \textit{Seriti} has often been translated to mean dignity or personality. Actually, that describes only the end result of the phenomenon. It is derived from the same word-stem \textit{riti} as \textit{moriti}, which means ‘shadow’ or ‘shade’. It is a physical phenomenon which expresses itself externally to the human body in a dynamic manner. It is like an aura around the human person, an invisible shadow or cloud or mist forming something like a magnetic or radar field. It gives forth into the traffic or weltering pool of life in community the uniqueness of each person and each object. While physically its seat is understood to be inside the human body, in the blood, its source is beyond and outside of the human physical body. (Setiloane 1986, 13) … This manner of understanding human personality explains the interplay which takes place when people come into contact or live together. The essence of being is ‘participation’, in which humans are always interlocked with one another. The human being is not only ‘vital force’, but more: ‘vital force in participation’ which forms the very soul of the community body and accounts for the miasma which attaches to the group, the clan or the tribe. ‘Participation’ with its concomitant element of ‘belonging’ is made possible by ‘\textit{seriti}’, which is ever engaged in interplay with other people’s \textit{diriti} whenever they come into contact.\textsuperscript{161}

Battle distinguishes between \textit{Ubuntu} and \textit{seriti}, when he says: “\textit{Ubuntu}, then, names the individual’s connectedness to her or his community; \textit{seriti} names the life force by which a community of persons are connected to each other.”\textsuperscript{162} He notes that both concepts “assume that

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., 51.
\textsuperscript{161} Gabriel Setiloane quoted in Nicolson, Persons in Community, 29.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid.
a person is intelligible only by being connected to social and natural environments. In this constant mutual interchange of personhood and community, *seriti* becomes indistinguishable from *Ubuntu* in that the unity of the life force depends on the individual’s unity with the community. Whilst it might appear to be indistinguishable, it is important to recognize that the power of the relationship consists in a ‘life-force’ that is seen to be strong when there is harmony (i.e. no loss of blood) and good health. A person without *Ubuntu* damages not only themselves, but their community as well. Bénézet Bujo explains this African understanding of life:

> Numerous studies have sufficiently shown that African thought and action are deeply determined by the community. Foundational to them is the concept of life. The individual knows him or herself to be immersed in the community to such an extent that personality can develop only in it and through it. This development does not take place in an asymmetrical way but is based on mutuality. It also includes a giving back of what one has received from the community. In concrete terms, there is interdependency which is based on the fact that all members have the task of mutually increasing the life force. Everybody’s behaviour and ethical action have consequences for the whole community: the good contributes to the increase of life, while evil destroys or at least reduces life.  

He notes that: “the interpretation of misfortune and sickness is particularly integrated into this attitude towards life.” This is “because no clan member can live in unrelatedness” and consequently “in cases of misfortune the cause is looked for within the community itself. According to African wisdom, a disease is always an indication that something in human relations is wrong. In other words, a disease can bring people to take the communal dimension seriously.” Bujo extrapolates this point by means of an example.

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163 Ibid.
164 Bujo, *The Ethical Dimension of Community*, 182.
165 Ibid.
166 Ibid.
167 Ibid.
Where a European may only inquire after the health of someone he meets, the African wishes to know, even from a total stranger, whether his family members are well. Not only a “How are you?” is important, but rather “How are your people?”

The question of what causes the disease is not raised, but rather who causes it. Whilst this runs the risk of reducing effects to ‘witchcraft’, it does show how the focus is not just on the individual person, but the entire community that person comes from. In this example we see the exemplar used for community is, in fact, family. In a primary sense, it would always be one’s family, but in a broader sense, the concern is for the larger community. Nicolson affirms, however, that

the best model for community as understood in African thought is the family. The family has no function outside itself. It is a means of personal growth for its members, and the interaction, the conversation and companionship between the growing and fully-grown members is also an end in itself. African culture is famous for its notion of the extended family (now seriously threatened by the advancing tide of European culture in its present form.) The extended family is capable of extension to include anyone, not only those related by blood, kinship or marriage. In the last resort, humanity itself is conceived of as a family, a family that one joins at birth, but does not leave by dying. Because of this no one is a stranger. The world is our common home and the earth is the property of all. Because human life only exists by being shared, all that is necessary for that life, for living and living well, is shared by the human family as a whole.

With its emphasis on a common home and a common humanity we see how the African understanding is compatible with the Hebraic understanding. Equally too, both cultures share a respect for life – and the African understanding of seriti is a sophisticated understanding that overturns the ‘primitive tribal’ tropes that plague several persons in the West. There is also room, I would argue, to see strong similarities between the Church’s concern for the People of God and the issue of Families, with the concern within Ubuntu for families and communities.

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168 Ibid.
169 Nicolson, Persons in Community, 28.
3.6 Life and the Divine Persons

The basic method of this work is to acknowledge that what we observe and see in human persons is related to, and revealed most clearly in, how we see the *Imago Dei* in them. This in turn reveals something about God. In applying this method, we have seen how life is important to human beings as they form communities and they, in turn, receive from their communities’ life. This allows them to acknowledge their relationship to each other in community, and themselves as members of that community, and as bearers of the *seriti* that animates the community relationships grounded in *Ubuntu*. In asking what this reveals about God, we see, analogically of course, that God is also concerned with life. Indeed, it is God who created all life and loves it into being – an existence sustained only in and through God’s love. Nicolson notes that “God creates because God loves. In God there is no difference between these two verbs – love and create. God’s creation as an expression of God’s love invites persons, created in God’s image, into being for others. Human nature is to love in such a way that something new and alive is always created.”\(^{170}\) This is why fertility in Africa is closely linked with the bestowal of a great gift from God.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter we have examined what it is that makes persons a community and we have shown how it is the interconnectedness and interdependence of persons on one another. This moves beyond a mere relation in blood or kinship to one that is familial. Tutu has shown how it can also be ecclesial when those bonds of relationship are ordered towards love. In the second place I

\(^{170}\) Battle, *Reconciliation*, 60.
have shown how *Ubuntu* reveals the importance of the communitarian and inter-subjective nature of African anthropological understanding. I have also shown how the value and importance of Life, particularly the creation of life, the enjoyment of life, the giving of the gift of life, comes from the Trinity, the Divine Persons in Unity – and is the reason for the Community’s existence. Thus, I would conclude that in African Theology, life and fertility are celebrated by the community. Persons cannot exist except in relation to the Community. They are either in or out of Community, but always in a relationship to the Community.
Chapter 4 Lonergan’s enrichment of *Ubuntu* and the Trinitarian Community of Divine Persons

4.1 Introduction

My argument continues in this chapter through utilizing certain key sections of the work of Bernard Lonergan. In previous chapters I have explored the concept of the human person in both the Western and African traditions, showing how the concept of ‘*Ubuntu*’ leads an individual towards recognizing and affirming the other, and in this way, a priority in terms of ‘Community’ is established. My argument here is simple. Community, for Lonergan, entails inter-subjectivity or recognizing that we are relationally linked to each other in a precise way. I will explore the recognition involved in *Ubuntu* and argue that employing Lonergan’s Cognitional Theory will yield a deeper and more intentional recognition of the other. This will result in a more intentional experience of *Ubuntu* and add some rigor to the African understanding of *Ubuntu*. At the same time such recognition will have theological significance. When a Christian looks towards another, the Christian believes one can perceive the image of God, the *Imago Dei*, in the other person. This other person is also a creation of God, valuable and valued, like oneself. Specifically, Christians believe this God to be Triune: that is three Divine Persons in a community of mutually indwelling love. The Divine Persons in the Trinity are different to the human persons in Community insofar as the former community is divine and the latter is not, but they are analogous in as much as they both share a form of relationship and are recognized as, and recognize their fellow members to be, part of a community. I propose to examine this analogous relationship and recognition as a community using insights I have drawn from Bernard Lonergan’s work. I also want to argue that the profoundest understanding of the *Imago
Dei is the *Imago Trinitatis*. In order to do this, I still need to elaborate what I mean, and what the various authors mean, by these terms.

My argument will thus begin with an explanation of Lonergan’s Cognitional Theory and how that grounds his understanding of communities, specifically an inter-subjective community, in a shared common meaning. I will then discuss this common meaning in terms of *Ubuntu* and show the importance of recognition both in his theory, and in the African understanding of *Ubuntu*.

### 4.2 Lonergan’s Cognitional Theory

Much of Lonergan’s thought finds its foundation in a sound understanding of his transcendental method that allows for and explains intentional consciousness. In his book *Method in Theology*, Lonergan describes the pattern that he perceived in the variety of operations that persons perform every day. The basic pattern refers to the four levels within his conscious-intentional structure of human subjects. It is this pattern, or our way of being conscious and intentional that can be thought of to be on four successive and related levels, that he proposed metaphorically to explain a person’s ability to achieve authenticity in self-transcendence.

The first part of *Method in Theology* sets out Lonergan’s understanding of Method and specifically his Transcendental Method. Lonergan sees the human person as a subject, or more accurately, an ‘operator’ who performs operations like “seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting, inquiring, imagining, understanding, conceiving, formulating, reflecting, marshaling and weighing the evidence, judging, deliberating, evaluating, deciding, speaking, [and] writing.”

He argues that this ordered set of transitive operations forms a dynamic, ordered whole that

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results in intentional consciousness. The basic pattern refers to the four levels within his conscious-intentional structure of Human Subjects. It is this pattern or our way of being conscious and intentional that Lonergan describes metaphorically to be on four successive and related levels. The movement to each level is accompanied by an insight in answer to a specific question (a direct insight on our experience (Empirical→Intellectual) from asking ‘What is it?’; a reflective insight on our understanding (Intellectual→Rational) from asking ‘Is it so?’; and a deliberative insight apprehending value on our judgement (Rational→Responsible) from asking ‘Ought it be so?’) These movements and questions illustrate the successive and related aspects of this pattern.

In being successive, Lonergan is saying that there is an order of operations within this pattern. That one cannot understand an object without first having made inquiries into and about the object; that one cannot reflect or pass judgement without first having understood the object; and one cannot decide on the goodness or morality of an issue without first deciding whether one’s experiential understanding is in fact true. All of this requires a precise attention to one’s experience.

In being related, Lonergan is meaning that our conscious awareness deepens, and our intentionality is increased as a result of and in some proportion to the degree with which we faithfully applied his transcendental precepts of being attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible in the prior level. In other words, a deliberative insight cannot take place without a reflective one, which in turn requires a direct insight. Thus, each insight presupposes and sublates the prior one.
In being *successive*, Lonergan is meaning that one cannot ask ‘*ought* it be so’ without first establishing whether it *is* so. And that requires knowing *what* it is to begin with. In being *related*, the direct insight is deepened, upon reflection, into a reflective insight, and similarly, after reflecting one apprehends the value of the object under consideration and is able to reach a deliberative insight. There is thus both clarity and depth in one’s consciousness, i.e. in one’s awareness of oneself, and clearer understanding and conviction in one’s intentionality such that what one intelligently knows, reasonably believes to be true and responsibly decides to be good becomes firm in one’s mind because one is at best certain that one’s judgements are true and good.

Lonergan describes how through this successive and related process yielding intentional consciousness, the person as a subject is capable of self-transcendence. Self-transcendence entails being conscious of one’s self-transcending. Lonergan makes the distinction that “we are conscious in two ways: in one way, through our sensibility, we undergo rather passively what we sense and imagine, our desires and fears, our delights and sorrows, our joys and sadness; in another way, through our intellectuality, when we understand, judge, and decide.”\(^{172}\) This second way allows for a more conscious intentionality in all our operations. Lonergan thus argues that one moves from being attentive to experience to growing in intentionality and self-transcendence by understanding intelligently, judging reasonably and deciding responsibly.

These imperatives are a core teaching in Lonergan’s work, and he builds many of his other ideas on top of this structure and uses this ‘level’ metaphor in other areas of his work. He employs this

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in two further areas I want to consider, his understanding of community and inter-subjectivity, and his understanding of relations. Let us consider first community and inter-subjectivity, which will necessarily involve an explanation of his understanding of meaning.

4.3 Community and Inter-subjectivity

Lonergan characteristically acknowledges a common usage understanding but goes on to propose a specialist understanding of the term ‘community’. The commonly understood understanding could be a geographic collective or group, but the specialist understanding involves another important term in Lonergan’s vocabulary, meaning. He notes that “as the members of the hive or herd belong together and function together, so too men [and women] are social animals, and the primordial basis of their community is not the discovery of an idea but a spontaneous inter-subjectivity”\(^{173}\). Part of this spontaneous inter-subjectivity will result in discovery of a common meaning. He identifies three levels of community echoing his cognitional theory. His starting point is that persons structure their lives to pursue the Good. In the pursuit of the Good, Lonergan established elsewhere that this entails persons are able to know the Good they seek and so recognize whether and how well they have managed to attain it. This ‘knowing’ draws from his cognitional theory. Just as in his cognitional theory he posited experience, understanding, judgement and decision, so in his definition of communities he defines, aside from a common usage collective, three levels of community: (i) corresponding to experience, there are inter-subjective communities whose “basis is spontaneous tendency. Its

manifestation is an elemental feeling of belonging together. Its nucleus is the family. Its expansion is the clan, the tribe, the nation.”

(ii) corresponding to intellectual insights and the good of order, there are civil communities, which involve “a complex product embracing and harmonizing material techniques, economic arrangements, and political structures. The measure of its development distinguishes primitive societies from civilizations”

and finally (iii) corresponding to judgements of value, there are cultural communities that transcend “the frontiers of states and the epochs of history. It is *cosmopolis*, not as an unrealized political ideal, but as a longstanding, non-political, cultural fact. It is the field of communication and the influence of artists, scientists, and philosophers. It is the bar of enlightened public opinion to which naked power can be driven to submit. It is the tribunal of history that may expose successful charlatans and may restore to honour the prophets stoned by their contemporaries.”

There are thus for Lonergan, three forms of community that are also successive and related: inter-subjective community, civil communities, and cultural communities. All three communities share a form of common meaning. Here Lonergan has a very nuanced understanding of meaning.

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175 Ibid.
176 Cosmopolis was a variable in Lonergan’s work on understanding. He explains that “it is in the first instance an X, what is to be known when one understands.” He explains further that cosmopolis “is not a group denouncing other groups; it is not a superstate ruling states; it is not an organization that enrolls members, nor an academy that endorses opinions, nor a court that administers a legal code. It is a withdrawal from practicality to save practicality. It is a dimension of consciousness, a heightened grasp of historical origins, a discovery of historical responsibilities. It is not something altogether new … It comes to minds prepared for it by earlier views, for they have taught man to think historically. It comes at a time when the totalitarian fact and threat have refuted the liberals and discredited the Marxists. It stands on basic analysis of compound-in-tension that is man; it confronts problems of which men are aware; it invites the vast potentialities and pent-up energies of our time to contribute to their solutions … Finally, it would be unfair not to stress the chief characteristic of cosmopolis. It is not easy.” See Lonergan et al., *Insight*, 266.
Lonergan explains that meaning “is embodied or carried in human inter-subjectivity, in art, in symbols, in language, and in the lives and deeds of persons.”\textsuperscript{178} This embodied or incarnate meaning “combines all or at least many of the other carriers of meaning”\textsuperscript{179} and includes “the meaning of a person.”\textsuperscript{180} Lonergan explains that meaning is made up of three elements: (i) sources, (ii) acts and (iii) terms of meaning.\textsuperscript{181} He distinguishes two types of sources: transcendental and categorical; five types of acts: potential, formal, full, constitutive or effective, and instrumental and explains that terms of meaning “is what is meant.”\textsuperscript{182} Having described the three elements of meaning he then asserts that meaning (comprised as it is of these three elements) has four functions: (i) cognitive, (ii) efficient, (iii) constitutive, and (iv) communicative.\textsuperscript{183} Lonergan locates inter-subjective community as the conjunction of the latter two functions of meaning: the constitutive and communicative functions of meaning.

In a similar way to his treatment of an individual’s meaning, Lonergan also posits four levels of common meaning that are achieved in inter-subjectivity: potential, formal, actual and realized that he asserts correspond to experience, understanding, judgement and decision. Lonergan states that:

For what is community? It is not just a number of men within a geographical frontier. It is an achievement of common meaning, and there are kinds and degrees of achievement. Common meaning is \textbf{potential} when there is a common field of experience, and to withdraw from that common field is to get out of touch. Common meaning is \textbf{formal} when there is common understanding, and one withdraws from that common understanding by misunderstanding, by incomprehension, by mutual incomprehension.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{178} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 57.
  \item \textsuperscript{179} Ibid., 73.
  \item \textsuperscript{180} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{181} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{182} Ibid., 75.
  \item \textsuperscript{183} Ibid., 76-78.
\end{itemize}
Common meaning is **actual** inasmuch as there are common judgements, areas in which all affirm and deny in the same manner; and one withdraws from that common agreement when one disagrees, when one considers true what others hold false and false what they think true. Common meaning is **realized** by will, especially by permanent dedication, in the love that makes families, in the loyalty that makes states, in the faith that makes religions. Community coheres or divides, begins or ends, just where the common field of experience, common understanding, common judgement, common commitments begin and end.\(^{184}\)

Being the foundational level, and as the ground on which other communities are built, I am concerned with Lonergan’s first type of community, the inter-subjective community. I believe that the notion of inter-subjectivity is in the Lonerganian corpus, similar to *Ubuntu* as it describes interpersonal relationships. An exploration of this will also lead us to consider our second area, Lonergan’s understanding of relations.

### 4.4 Inter-subjectivity, relations and *Ubuntu*

According to Lonergan, human beings are fundamentally relationally linked to one another. He explains that “*[p]rior to the ‘we’ that results from the mutual love of an ‘I’ and a ‘thou,’ there is the earlier ‘we’ that precedes the distinction of subjects and survives its oblivion.*”\(^{185}\) Human relations are not operations between objects, but rather between two independent subjects.

Lonergan explains that “the inter-subjective situation, the vital interchange of mutual presence...all the aspects of inter-subjectivity studied by psychologists—and the importance of decision in leading a human life are given full emphasis. ... [You] have two subjects, and the two subjects are not totally separate. Besides ‘I’ and ‘thou’, there is ‘we’, ‘us’, ‘ourselves’, ‘ours’—a viewpoint for living.”\(^{186}\) This viewpoint is understood by all cultures. As we saw

\(^{184}\) Lonergan, "Existenz and Aggiornamento," 226.

\(^{185}\) Lonergan, *Method*, 57.

\(^{186}\) Lonergan, "Philosophical Positions with Regard to Knowing," 235.
above, cultural communities share a common meaning that is predicated on the recognition of prior inter-subjective meanings.

We saw how for Lonergan a subject is an operator who consciously performs various operations. Operations conducted in an ordered, successive and related way enable the operator, the Subject, to become aware, become conscious, i.e. to become present to oneself, in order to transcend one’s self. Inter-subjectivity is thus the pattern of behaviour that relates subjects to one another. Both subjects continue to be intentionally conscious but now they are specifically conscious and aware of each other. This is the ‘we’, ‘us’ and ‘ourselves’ when we are able to see ourselves in relation to the Other, and in certain cases, how two subjects can form an inter-subjective whole.

I now wish to apply Lonergan’s cognitional theory to Ubuntu. I believe that in much the same way as inter-subjective meaning functions in Lonergan’s thought, recognition of humanity and dignity, play a similar rôle in the thinking of those who practice Ubuntu. In both theories, Lonergan’s cognitional theory is important. I have already outlined in the previous pages how Lonergan bases his understanding of community, meaning and inter-subjectivity on the levels proposed in his cognitional theory. I now wish to apply this process analogously to Ubuntu.

The experience of the other in Community is most immediate in Africa. One sees oneself first as part of a community. In many African forms of greeting, much attention is paid to enquiring not after the person directly, but into the well-being of their family. This intrinsically associates one’s individual well-being with that of others. One understands one’s rôle in the community in relation to the other. One is never just an individual but is ‘my sister’s son’ or ‘my brother’s friend’. The extended relationship is made explicit, not just as a matter of historical record or genetic fact, but as a social reality, reinforced wherever possible, in greetings, duties,
commitments and relationships. Ubuntu argues that in recognizing the humanity of the other, one comes to realize one’s own humanity. Ubuntu is Africa’s expression of a common judgement of what one person means to another. It is not a compound experience that can be broken into levels – but it does include within itself the experience of the other; an understanding of the relationship of that other subject with oneself as a subject who is conscious of being aware of the other; and a judgement that this relationship exists and is valuable, i.e. ordered to the Good of community. It does not end in judgement but ideally concludes with an action that affirms the judgement. It can thus be concretely determined. I believe that in thinking about the process with Lonergan’s cognitional theory and his stages of experiencing, understanding, judging and deciding, one can more fully and more intentionally live out Ubuntu. It is very easy, for example, to affirm the platitude that everyone is human – but on a continent where there is a lot of human suffering the recognition of another’s humanity without the logical compassion or practical love and charity that would obviously respond to such suffering is hollow. The Cognitional Theory thus helps to ensure that Ubuntu is more fully realized, not just as an understanding, but as a way of life that involves decisions and commitments arising from the affirmed relationship. Since Ubuntu explains that the quality I recognize in the other is revealed in myself, there must be a process to that recognition. This is the ‘how’ of the recognition of humanity.

Ultimately, Ubuntu stresses, in general terms, the relationship in community – and specifically it is the recognition of the other, ultimately as a person, that provides the recognition of oneself as a person. In failing to recognize the other as a person, worthy of respect and dignity, one fails to be recognizable by others as a person, worthy of respect and dignity.

Ubuntu is thus a concrete practical example which employs the various levels because it is not just a matter of elemental experience, or interior understanding, but rather one that involves
concrete action borne from a decision that affirms not just the existence of the Other as a fact, but the value of the other as Good and worthy of being in relationship. The practice of *Ubuntu*, then, culminates not just in a recognition of a truth, but an acting on that truth – an action that out of respect for the inherent value of the person, is always charitable. As St Ignatius says, “love shows itself more in deeds than in words.”\(^{187}\)

### 4.5 Being-in-love

I have so far spoken only of the four levels of experiencing, understanding, judging and deciding, but Lonergan concludes his theory with a description of the dynamic state of ‘being-in-love’ – his fifth transcendental – that is a characterization of the commitment borne from the well-made decision and allows for a variety of inter-subjective and interpersonal relations.

Lonergan differentiates between our being-in-love with other persons, and with God, but notes that we are persons in our self-transcendence, and inasmuch as we are not self-transcending our “transcendental subjectivity is mutilated or abolished.”\(^{188}\) This is similar to *Ubuntu*’s understanding of not being a person unless we recognize the other, and that therefore *Ubuntu* is another way of naming self-transcendence from an African perspective and of emphasising the importance of transcendental subjectivity.

This relational state and commitment can be experienced in romances, in relationships with parents and siblings and all will develop their capacity for self-transcendence, but the fulfillment

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\(^{188}\) Lonergan, *Method*, 103.
of our self-transcendence is when it is experienced with God who alone can fully satisfy. As St Augustine is said to have exclaimed ‘our hearts are restless until they rest in you, God.’\textsuperscript{189} Intersubjectivity allows for a certain amount of self-transcendence, which may eventually orient every subject towards a relationship with God because at the heart of relationship is love.

Lonergan defines self-transcendence in this way:

\begin{quote}
(Our) questions for intelligence, for reflection, and for deliberation constitute our capacity for self-transcendence. That capacity becomes an actuality when one falls in love. Then one’s being becomes being-in-love. Such being-in-love has its antecedents, its causes, its conditions, its occasions. But once it has blossomed forth and as long as it lasts, it takes over. It is the first principle. From it flow one’s desires and fears, one’s joys and sorrows, one’s discernment of values, one’s decisions and deeds.\textsuperscript{190}
\end{quote}

Lonergan notes that ‘being-in-love in an unrestricted manner’ is what the greatest love, love-itself, is. He writes:

\begin{quote}
Beyond the moral operator that promotes us from judgements of fact to judgements of value with their retinue of decisions and actions, there is a further realm of interpersonal relations and total commitment in which human beings tend to find the immanent goal of their being and, with it, their fullest joy and deepest peace. … From a specifically Christian viewpoint, I have characterized the total commitment of religious living as “being in love in an unrestricted manner”; I have associated it with St. Paul’s statement that “God’s love has flooded our inmost heart through the Holy Spirit he has given us” (Romans 5:5); and I have noted that the Christian case of the subject being in love with God is complemented by God’s manifestation of his love for us in the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus.\textsuperscript{191}
\end{quote}

Lonergan speaks of being-in-love as the ultimate consequence of being-in-relationship. Since our self-transcendence, and ground for questioning, tends towards the dynamic state of being-in-love

\textsuperscript{190} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 105.
\textsuperscript{191} Ibid., 400-401.
in an unrestricted manner with the ultimate, i.e. God-self, it is thus this ultimate against which all
else is judged. Our humanity is thus judged as human when it conforms to the image of God we
believe it contains. Lonergan explains that “our separate, unrevealed, hidden cores have a
common circle of reference, the human community, and for believers an ultimate point of
reference, which is God who is all in all.”192 It is against that reference that one judges.

The ‘how’ of Ubuntu thus lies in a recognition and affirmation of relationship. The question now
becomes ‘what’ is it that is recognized? We speak of ‘humanity’ and recognizing the other as a
person, i.e. a conscious subject who has desires for authenticity and individual capacity and
experiences of self-transcendence. A ‘who’, rather than a ‘what’. But there is a ‘what’ that makes
us recognize the ‘who’ within, and theologically I would assert that it is the image of the God
who loves us, and in whom we are caught up in this state of being-in-love, and with whom we
discover that we are, and have always been, in-relationship.

We have discussed inter-subjectivity and its relationship to human communities, especially
through the self-transcendence and processes of mutual self-mediation. But in this move to
considering the relationships of the Trinity, we must also consider inter-subjectivity within God.
There is the inter-subjectivity internal and common to the Trinity, whereby God shares one
common subjectivity with the three Divine Persons/Subjects193, Father, Son and Spirit. But there

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193 "The divine persons are three subjects of one subjectivity, meaning that they are three instances of awareness and self-awareness (subjects) that share one way of being aware (subjectivity), or three distinct instances of one awareness. Contrast this with the way that human beings are subjects with subjectivity. You and I are both subjects, and we share a commonality of subjectivity in the sense that we are both human. However, concretely, your way of being aware is different than mine. Yours is yours, it is “in you,” as it were, while mine is mine, “in
is also the inter-subjectivity of Creator and Creature. This is what Lonergan was referring to when he spoke of ‘being-in-love’. But just as we can model our relationships on the external inter-subjectivity between Creator and Creature, we can also reflect on the internal subjectivity of the inter-subjective relations of the three Divine Persons/Subjects.\(^{194}\)

We can only talk analogously of this, but if we imagine the human case of an example of inter-subjectivity, for example the case of adults who see a baby for the first time. Instantly normal adults are disarmed and become playful, child-like. Analogously, we might imagine how much joy God takes in viewing us, his creation. Perhaps Jesus’ admonition for us to be like little children is so that we can recognize the joy God takes in us.

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194 This would lead us to understand God’s divine transcendence and non-competitive relation to the world that Tanner talks about. See Kathryn Tanner, *God and Creation in Theology: Tyranny or Empowerment* (hereafter *God and Creation in Theology*) (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2005), 158.
Therefore, the cognitional process, which requires a judgement, is not just affirming an experience of oneself and the other as understood in relationship to each other, but it makes a judgement that recognizes the other as related not because of a likeness to oneself, but as sharing a likeness to God, to whom one realizes one is also similar, made as each person is, in God’s image and likeness. As the Fourth Lateran Council points out, any similarity between the creator and creatures is characterized by an even greater dissimilarity.\footnote{See Peter Hünerrmann et al., \textit{Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals} (hereafter \textit{Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals}), 43rd ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), 320.} Theologically then, we are recognizing precisely the \textit{Imago Dei} when we recognize the humanity of the Other, and in recognizing it in the Other we are able to affirm it in ourselves. \textit{Ubuntu} thus identifies the mutuality contained in relationships. But using Lonergan’s cognitional theory, \textit{Ubuntu} is able to be more fully practiced and thus received. Through consciously recognizing the \textit{Imago Dei} in the Other person, one becomes more aware of God and thus able to know God better. By experiencing the charity of others towards oneself, one concretely experiences God’s love.

\textit{Ubuntu} is therefore not only recognizing precisely the \textit{Imago Dei} in the other, and affirming that as true, but is also affirming it as a truth for and of oneself. Lonergan considers the \textit{Imago Dei} in various places of his work differently to how it may commonly be understood. I will consider how he wrote of the \textit{Imago Dei} in two of his works, \textit{Verbum} and \textit{De Verbo Incarnato}.

Lonergan dedicated a chapter in his work \textit{Verbum} to considering the \textit{Imago Dei}, by which he meant “the \textit{imago similitudinis} [image of likeness] of trinitarian theory.”\footnote{Bernard J. F. Lonergan, Frederick E. Crowe, and Robert M. Doran, \textit{Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas} (hereafter \textit{Verbum}), Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan (Toronto: Lonergan Research Institute, Regis College/University of Toronto Press, 1997), 192.} In it he considers two
opposed views of knowing, a Platonist view and an Aristotelian view. He writes that “The Platonist conceives knowing as primarily confrontation, but the Aristotelian conceives knowing as primarily perfection, act, identity.”\textsuperscript{197} “[T]he conceptualist knows human intellect only by what it does, but the intellectualist knows and analyzes not only what intelligence in act does but also what it is.”\textsuperscript{198} I understand Lonergan to argue that God is pure Act. Since God is the most infinite act of knowing, the most infinite act of understanding, the most infinite act of love. Therefore, he conceives of the \textit{Imago Dei} as being the most complete act of knowing.

In commenting on infinite acts of knowing, understanding and love, Frederick Crowe notes that “[t]he social dimension of the \textit{Imago Dei}, which is in fact the \textit{Imago Trinitatis}, is illustrated in the fact that infinite understanding, truth and love form a perfect community that in humans remain accidents in a substance, person and subject. Nevertheless, a society of persons is necessary, though in different ways and for different reasons, both to God and humankind.”\textsuperscript{199}

When I try to relate it to \textit{Ubuntu}, I would argue that the most complete act is also the most correct one, and if the most correct action of \textit{Ubuntu} is the affirmation of the Other’s humanity and dignity as a person, then in the process of coming to that knowledge, aided as I suggested by Lonergan’s cognitional theory, then one arrives at not just knowledge but a deeper appreciation for \textit{Imago Dei}. But it is an \textit{Imago Dei} that “is the \textit{imago similitudinis} [image of likeness] of trinitarian theory.”\textsuperscript{200}

\textsuperscript{197} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{198} Ibid., 195.
\textsuperscript{199} Frederick E. Crowe, The Doctrine of the Most Holy Trinity (hereafter The Doctrine of the Most Holy Trinity) (Willowdale: Regis College, 1970), 179.
\textsuperscript{200} Lonergan et al., \textit{Verbum}, 192, footnote 195.
Elsewhere Lonergan distinguishes image from form. In the first thesis in Part 1 of his *De Verbo Incarnato* theologically, wherein Lonergan is intending “to arrive at the correct understanding of the New Testament text” he examines the question of whether Jesus is truly God. An important preliminary note to his argument is a consideration of St Paul’s schematic ‘synthetic pattern’ which “consists from the start in a linking of similars, a linking of dissimilars, and a transition from dissimilarity to similarity.” He begins by noting that St Paul said: “You became imitators of us and of the Lord” (1 Thes. 1.6) now “be imitators of me” (1 Cor. 4.16) and “be imitators of me as I am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1). Lonergan notes that “Imitation of Christ is taught (a) through the metaphor of putting on a garment, and (b) through expressions of ‘formation’ and ‘conformation’ of which the etymological root is *morphē*, ‘form’ and cites Galatians 3:27 and 4:19. He writes that “Christ is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4.4, Colossians 1.15), and so imitation of Christ is imitation of God, Hence, Ephesians 5.1 says, ‘Therefore be imitators of God.’” He argues that “[t]he image that humans can imitate is twofold” and proceeds to cite 1 Corinthians 15:47-49 and Romans 12:2. He continues that “[a]s the image is twofold, so is the mediation” and concludes that “since Adam was created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27), the new man in Christ follows the Creator’s intention” Lonergan believes that “the ‘form of God,’ however, is distinct from ‘the image of God’: Christ *is* the image of God, but is *in* the form of God.”

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202 Ibid., 67.
203 Ibid., 53.
204 Ibid.
205 Ibid., 55.
206 Ibid.
207 Ibid., 57.
208 Ibid., 125.
This is a different understanding of the image of God that all persons possess. Lonergan here is arguing that Christ is the image of God, but we can still be like God in imitating him and being like him and thus constituting the Body of Christ. Through what Lonergan terms mutual self-mediation the finality of personhood in community and in the love of God is visible. I do not want to explore Lonergan’s treatment of this particular point in too much more detail as it will lead us away from my primary focus, which is that Lonergan considers Christ to be the image of God and distinguishes image and form. Tanner explains how the image is perfected in the form.

When the Genesis verses (1:27 and 5:1) say that human beings are created in the image of God that means, not that human beings have something in them that images God, but simply that they were made for a relationship with God, one perfected in Christ.\(^{209}\)

Balthasar makes the same distinction when he says we can understand how St Paul can:

apply the concept of form (μορφή) to Christ—and to the Christ-form which is to take shape in us (Gal 4:19)—in its proper and not its analogous sense. The interior attunement, proportion, and harmony between God and man in Christ-form raises it to the level of an archetype, not only of all religious and ethical, contemplative and active behaviour, but equally of the beautiful.\(^{210}\)

Since *Ubuntu* not only recognizes the humanity of the person but also confirms one’s own humanity, as a result the more one recognizes Others, the greater one’s humanity becomes. This is a formation, or a constant ‘putting on of a garment’, to use Paul’s words, of oneself in God’s image as we become more like Him. This will enable us to act in a more Christ-like way, if we see things as he sees them. We can anthropomorphise God and imagine that we are seeing with

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\(^{209}\) Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key* (hereafter *Christ the Key*), Current Issues in Theology, vol. 7 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 2.

his eyes, feeling with his heart, but in concrete terms, the person who did this was Christ who was fully in relationship with the Father. This bearing a likeness is described more fully in Lonergan’s Trinitarian theology211, and thus is the move from recognizing the Imago Dei, to recognizing the Imago Trinitatis. This focus upon the Imago Trinitatis is suggestive of the reality of what I think Ubuntu invites us to experience, to see our humanity most fully expressed communally through authentic inter-personal relationships, grounded in love and made possible by our innate capacity for self-transcendence to which we all intentionally attune ourselves.

This recognition could perhaps be characterized as an acceptance of “Social trinitarianism” which Anthony J. Godzieba describes as a “theory that the perichoretic relationship of the Trinity should provide the model for relationships in human society.”212 It was popularized by Jürgen Moltmann, as Richard Bauckham explains: “God experiences a history with the world in which he both affects and is affected by the world, and which is also the history of his own Trinitarian relationships as a community of divine Persons who include the world within their love. This Trinitarian doctrine dominates Moltmann’s later work, in which the mutual relationships of the three Persons as a perichoretic, social Trinity are the context for understanding the reciprocal relationships of God and the world.”213 Bauckham explains that “social Trinitarianism understands God as in himself a fellowship of love, and so finds relationships of free friendship

between humans as most adequately reflecting God and constituting his ‘kingdom’”

“God’s relationship to his creation is one of mutual indwelling. Because God is transcendent beyond the world it dwells in him, but because, as the Spirit, he is also immanent within the world, he dwells in it.”

Similarly, the relations of God in the Trinity can serve as analogous models for us with each other. Analogous models, not exact. I do not think Lonergan is asking us to recognize the perichoretic relationship as that upon which we should model our human relationships – only that we can recognize something analogous in the human to the Divine. Karen Kilby has been critical of the use of Social Trinitarianism and especially of elevating perichoresis as a model of relationships. She notes that “the social theorist does not just say, perhaps the divine perichoresis, which we can understand as being akin to our best relationships, only better, makes the three Persons into one God; she goes on to say, should we not model our relationships on this wonderful thing, the divine perichoresis?”

Kilby acknowledges that perichoresis has helped explain the unity of the Trinity, but warns against projection which, she argues, “is particularly problematic in at least some social theories of the Trinity because what is projected onto God is immediately reflected back onto the world, and this reverse projection is said to be what is in fact important about the doctrine.” She accuses it of being projective in that it appears to function such that “[f]irst, a concept, perichoresis, is used to name what is not understood, to name whatever it is that makes the three Persons one. Secondly, the concept is filled out rather suggestively with notions borrowed from our own experience of relationships

214 Ibid., 378.
215 Ibid.
217 Ibid.
and relatedness. And then, finally, it is presented as an exciting resource Christian theology has to offer the wider world in its reflections upon relationships and relatedness.” Kilby prefers to argue that “affirming a doctrine of the Trinity does not depend on being able to answer it, nor does establishing the relevance of the doctrine depend on finding the ‘right’ answer to it.”

Since this thesis is not disputing the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity, and uses perichoresis in a deliberately analogous manner, the author does not believe Kilby’s criticism is fatal to this project, especially since the main understanding of the Trinity is premised on the contributions of Lonergan and Balthasar.

Lonergan’s understanding of the Trinity is contained in his ‘Psychological Analogy’ whereby the Divine Processions are likened to Intellectual emanations. As we have seen, Lonergan considers ‘likeness’ a particular term. Blackwood illustrates this term in his summary of Lonergan’s explanation of the ‘Psychological Analogy’ when he explains that:

two types of intellectual emanation can be distinguished in such a way that one of them can be called generation while the other one may not be. Strictly speaking, generation indicates “the origin of something alive from a conjoined living principle, with a resulting likeness in nature” (TGS 191). To get such a likeness, the act by which A generates B must be the act by which the nature of B bears a likeness to the nature of A. … the act by which God generates the Word is the act by which the Word bears a likeness to the nature of God. … God is an infinite act of intelligibility, which must be an infinite act of intelligence, which means that God can be conceived of, analogically, as an infinite act of understanding. An infinite act of understanding is affirmed to be true in an infinite Word of truth. The affirmation of Truth in the Word grounds the procession of love, and infinite truth brings forth infinite Love, as a procession of actual inclination toward the truth that is known. Thus, in God, we can say analogically that God the Father is an infinite act of Understanding the divine nature, generating a Word of Truth, with the two together spirating a Spirit of Love.

218 Ibid., 443.

He further explains that:

In the Trinity, one has the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Father generates the Son, and the Father and Son together spirate the Spirit... The Father is the father of the Son, and so there is a relation of paternity from Father to Son. The Son is the son of the Father, and so there is a relation of filiation (sonship) from the Son to the Father. There is a relation known as active spiration from the co-principle of Father and Son to the Holy Spirit, and finally, the Holy Spirit receives the spiration from the co-principle, and so there is a relation of passive (receptive) spiration from the Holy Spirit to the co-principle” … the Father is paternity, the Son is filiation, and the Spirit is spiration. But when we say “is,” we have to be careful. What subsists is not a separate Father, Son, and Spirit; what subsists is God, which subsists as the distinct (but not separate) subsistents known as Father, Son, and Spirit. 220

Lonergan arrives at the following four relationships: paternity, active and passive spiration and filiation. Blackwood explains Lonergan’s definitions of them as follows:

“1. The relation of paternity is a relation from the Father to the Son; the relation of assumption for which the secondary act of the incarnation is a created condition is also a relation to the Son; therefore, the secondary act of the incarnation can be said to participate in paternity.

2. The relation of active spiration is a relation from the Father and Son as one principle to the Holy Spirit; the relation of indwelling for which sanctifying grace is a created condition is also a relation to the Holy Spirit; therefore, sanctifying grace can be said to participate in active spiration.

3. The relation of passive spiration is a relation from the Holy Spirit to the Father and Son as one principle; the relation of loving response for which the habit of charity is a created condition is also a relation to the Father and Son as one principle; therefore, the habit of charity can be said to participate in passive spiration.

4. Finally, the relation of filiation is a relation from the Son to the Father; the relation of filial adoption in the beatific vision for which the light of glory is a created condition is also a relation to the Father; therefore, the light of glory can be said to participate in the light of glory.” 221

220 Ibid., 9.
221 Ibid., 14-15.
When we consider Social Trinitarianism, along with Lonergan’s contributions on the Trinity, we see that they both require us to use analogy. Doran notes that both Lonergan and Hans Urs von Balthasar offer different emphases. He writes that Balthasar’s emphasis:

uncovers the grounds of those categories that are specific to theology. It renames the ground that Philip the Chancellor discovered in a metaphysical context when he articulated what has come to be called the theorem of the supernatural. It points to and begins to clear a field that is aesthetic and dramatic. A genuine Christian rendition of ‘religiously differentiated consciousness’ will employ categories that are, in great part, aesthetic and dramatic in nature.222

And that Lonergan

uncovers the grounds of the categories shared by theology with other sciences and disciplines. It does in our day for the development of systematic meaning in philosophy and theology what Aristotle was able to do for Aquinas once the theorem of the supernatural freed theologians to study ‘nature’ on its own terms.223

Lonergan’s identification then of General Categories that theology shares with science, and indeed knowledge generally, are suitably complemented by the identification by Balthasar of the so-called ‘Special Categories’ of theology that are aesthetic and dramatic – the beautiful contemplative dialogue with God in prayer and the active living out of that relationship by persons in a community that recognizes the image of God in the other person.

Theologically, this recognition of the other as the image of God, is akin to us seeing Jesus in each other – for “as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.”224 This is the same insight that the African concept of Ubuntu is built around – recognizing the human dignity of the other is what our own personhood is constructed upon. In Christian theology, when

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223 Ibid.
we recognize the image of God in the other Person, we recognize their own dignity and
inestimable value. When we are attentive and reverent towards the other person, we in turn
become holy ourselves, and so others find the image of God in us too.

I shall now turn to examine the contribution of Balthasar, specifically looking at the meaning of
thelogical persons and how a proper understanding of persons can contribute to solving the
present problem in our society of the pervasive lack of a sense of belonging to a true community
that values its members. I shall show how for Balthasar the Church is one such community that
still offers this proper understanding and how Ubuntu is able to overcome the sense of isolation
that individuals feel. Taken together I suggest that these insights are mutually complementary,
and that the African concept of Ubuntu might serve as a useful precursor to explaining the proper
rôle of the Church and as a culturally-familiar reinforcement of Christian values within Africa.
Chapter 5 The communitarian dimension has a magisterial principle at its heart.

In Chapter Five, the general content of the theological meaning of persons will be discussed with reference to Balthasar’s work on the Trinity and why their community is perfect because of their perfect relationships. I want to argue that there is within *Ubuntu*, beyond the common understanding of a deliberate recognition of persons and one’s own personhood, an opportunity to plumb the depths of the greatest of Christian mysteries, the Trinity. This opportunity lies in being able to explain through analogy the theological recognition of divine Persons indwelling within each person. Thus, the theological meaning of *Ubuntu* lies in recognizing not only the humanity of the other person, but the Image of God in the Other as well. This argument will be developed and the specific theological meaning of the Image of God being the Image of the Trinity will be discussed, with reference to Hans Urs von Balthasar’s work.

I would first like to examine the theological meaning of persons generally. Balthasar argues that one perceives oneself as a person instead of just an individual when one recognises the theological meaning of persons. This is to say that without comprehending that there is a theological meaning, there are no persons, only individuals. Balthasar necessarily then sees a distinction between an individual conscious subject and a person.

Carolyn Chau in her work on Balthasar and Charles Taylor, explains this distinction in the words of Victoria Harrison\(^{225}\) who noted that, “for Balthasar, true theological personhood does not

coincide with birth.” 226 Balthasar asserts that “there exists a great distinction between the being of a conscious subject and the being of a person.” 227 Balthasar admits that whilst “it is common to use the two interchangeably in colloquial speech, ‘person’ means more than mere consciousness” 228, and Balthasar seeks to “reserve the term ‘person’ for all that a human subject comprises, beyond mere consciousness.” 229 Chau explains that Balthasar agrees “that we are, in some sense, always on the way to personhood, for we come to consciousness through the recognition of ourselves as beloved” 230. An example Chau uses of this, derived from Balthasar, is in observing how we come to recognize our belovedness through “our mother’s smile.” 231

Thus, for Balthasar, there is a movement from consciousness to personhood and his example of this is in the recognition of being loved by another. Between human persons, Ubuntu describes this movement in terms of recognizing the other’s humanity. The theological meaning of this, is I believe, contained in the recognition of the other bearing the Imago Dei, a likeness of Divinity.

We are not just simply the Imago Dei, but rather we are the evolving Imago Dei. Our fleeting recognition, given the image that we have used earlier, provides for us the sense of the evolution of personhood which is ultimately fulfilled in being fully Imago Dei. If full personhood is becoming the Imago Dei we aspire to this divine personhood even if we are sinful.

Owing to the sinfulness in human persons this recognition is often fleeting and can often be all but a glimpse of recognition, so we have to constantly remind ourselves of it if our relationships

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227 Ibid.
228 Ibid.
229 Ibid.
230 Ibid.
231 Ibid.
are to bear witness to this fact. Between Divine Persons, however, the recognition is perfect and not fleeting, because the Divine Persons as relations are eternal and each Person through their mission reveals the others. This process of revealing is like an unveiling and further veiling, which results in a conscious fleeting recognition. In Lonergan’s terms, the experience of this recognition, understood and judged to be true is as certain as anything else experienced, and so however short the duration, once revealed, it can never be minimised or discounted.

In order to examine this further, I propose to return to the discussion of how Balthasar views Persons and why they have a special rôle in his dramatic theology. This will entail a discussion of the rôle of freedom, for Persons and Communities, and how we are ultimately free to imitate God both personally and as a community. I will conclude that in recognizing the image of God in the other we will come to recognize not just the *Imago Dei* but the *Imago Trinitatis*. Our communities can therefore be examples of faint reflections of the Trinity, where just as the Divine persons are bound together in love, so in our communities, each person can be bound together in love to create a community. As in each community there exists order to maintain the community, so I will show how for Balthasar this order is an obedience to God that is found through a process of love, worship, and contemplation of God in prayer. Ultimately this contemplation can lead to contemplating the presence of God in the other person through recognising that the other person is created and personally bears the image of God, the *Imago Dei*. In recognising the *Imago Dei* in the community of persons one is led to reflect on the Trinitarian community. This confirms the thesis that the most profound recognition of the presence of God in the *Imago Dei* is, in the community, those others, who reveal the *Imago Trinitatis*. Since for Balthasar one’s full personhood is attained in the degree to which one is in relationship to God and living out the mission to which one is called, it follows, therefore, that
for Balthasar this community is properly the Church, or the community of Persons most in
*communio* with God, the Saints. The attainment of personhood can also be expressed, in
Balthasarian terms, as the degree to which our creaturely finite freedom is attuned towards the
infinite freedom that belongs to God the Creator. I shall thus first examine Balthasar’s
theological meaning of Persons before moving to examine the rôle of freedom, the exercise of
which propels conscious subjects towards personhood.

5.1 The theological meaning of Persons

Our question is what is the theological meaning of persons? This presumes that beyond an
ordinary meaning, there is a specifically theological one. I want to argue that this theological
meaning for Balthasar derives from the divine initiative of God in the theo-drama. That is to say
that the theo-drama is not just a drama about God, but about what God has done, and it involves
us as actors, who were created by God interacting with God. This raises an obvious question of
how God can be a subject in the drama? Balthasar, in his essay *On the concept of a Person*, notes
that

> after a personless idealism met its end in Hegel, the popular atheistic materialism of a
Feuerbach had to rediscover the elementary fact that there simply cannot be a single
person, existing within himself, but that existence as a person comes about only in the
relationship between the I and Thou.²³²

This I and Thou is readily identifiable in human persons, in the self and the other – but in looking
at the theological meaning one sees it present too in the Divine Persons in the Trinity. According
to the Church’s understanding of the Trinity as it has been articulated through the ages, the
Father and the Son are in a relationship of Paternity and Filiation, and the Spirit is actively and

passively spirated. I shall explain how Balthasar describes the Divine Persons within his theo-
drama that gives an account of God’s working in the world.

I have explained how for Balthasar there is a movement from being a mere individual conscious
subject to becoming a person, because, as Balthasar notes “[i]n Christo, however, every man can
cherish the hope of not remaining a merely individual conscious subject but of receiving
personhood from God, becoming a person, with a mission that is likewise defined *in Christo*.“233
Chau notes that: “For Balthasar, the person of Christ is the one who forms the ‘acting area’ for
all human beings. Christ is the ‘way’ into the drama in which God and humanity are engaged
because of the free, initiating love of God the Father. That is, the true horizon of human
existence and where one’s ‘itinerary’ flows is from and toward divine life, infinite freedom”234
Balthasar thus explains how Christ is the model for all of us as characters in this theo-drama
because:

> in the identity of Jesus’ person and mission, we have the realization par excellence of
what is meant by a dramatic “character”: … In the case of Jesus Christ, we have, in the
terms of real life, the truth of what is found on the stage, that is, the utter and total
identification of the character as a result of his utter and total performance of his
mission. Thus, in theo-drama, he is not only the main character but the model for all
other actors and the one who gives them their own identity as characters.235

The recognition of our belovedness is revealed for Balthasar when an individual enters into a
relationship with God and discovers God’s personal love for them. The free response to that love
is a desire to be of service and the individual thus receives a mission. This mission is received,

Harrison notes, as an Hegelian Idea. She explains that:

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234  Chau, "A Theological Interpretation of Catholic Witness and Mission in a Secular Age: Charles Taylor and Hans Urs Von Balthasar on Faith, Church, and Modernity", 152.
For Hegel, a thing’s Idea is a potentiality striving to be actualized. For example, the Idea of a coconut is a palm tree; the Idea of a caterpillar is a butterfly. Similarly, for von Balthasar, the Idea that is unique to each human being is one striving to be actualized. When an individual is given a personal identity along with her mission, that identity is given in an incipient form. It develops only as she lives out her mission, for following her mission is the means by which a person’s Idea is actualized. In other words, living out one’s mission is the way in which one becomes a fully developed person, which, for von Balthasar, is an integrated one.236

This integration, Harrison notes, has an internal and external aspect because “living out one’s mission relates one to other people”237. The receiving of this mission, and the living out of it which moves one to full personhood is for Balthasar developed in ‘dramatic dialogue’ with God. This dialogue is not only between the characters in the Drama, but with the characters in dialogue with the Triune Divine Persons.

Since God is Triune and a community of Divine Persons who create and love the world into being, it is from this Divine community, acting in a way which brings life, that our human communities must also act to bring life into the world. In this way human persons are related to each other because they all share the same image of their Creator who created them.

Balthasar thus begins his treatment of Divine Persons in the theo-drama by asking whether God can in fact enter the drama and play a part in it without becoming mythological.238 For Balthasar, the Divine Persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, who exist within the one Triune Godhead, can never appear within the theo-drama in isolation.239 Balthasar observes that:

> Jesus claims and shows himself to be the Son of the Father in a way that sets him apart from other men. To this extent, the hidden God is able to reveal himself in him—and not in a fragmentary way either, but fully and fundamentally—without ceasing to be God above all. He is able to become immanent in the world drama without surrendering his

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236 Harrison, "Personal Identity and Integration," 434.
237 Ibid.
239 Ibid.
transcendence above and beyond it. To take the most extreme situation: he can put himself under God’s judgement without ceasing to be the Judge. And if the divine Ground, the Father, is really and exhaustively expounded in the incarnate Son, it means that, while the sacred mystery is publicly proclaimed, it does not cease to be a mystery; we always need consecration, the gift of the Spirit, the “eyes of faith”, if we are to discern the unveiled mystery.240

In other words, for Balthasar “theological persons cannot be defined in isolation from their dramatic action.”241 He explains that “[w]e know about the Father, Son and Spirit as divine “Persons” only through the figure and disposition of Jesus Christ.”242 Both Jesus, and the Spirit implicitly reveal the Father through their relationship to the Father, of being generated or sent from the Father. This is their mission and the theological meaning of persons thus includes the mission and their obedience in carrying out that mission from the Father. The completion of this mission must be undertaken in total freedom. Balthasar argues that it is only ‘in complete freedom’ that God can ‘reveal himself and give himself to be loved’ and this is what makes the drama ‘personal’.243

Balthasar answers the question of whether God can be involved in the Drama and not become mythological when he concludes that God “is above the play in that he is not trapped in it but in it insofar as he is fully involved in it.” He notes that “[t]he Father seems to remain above the play since he sends the Son and the Spirit; but in fact he could not involve himself more profoundly than by thus sending them: ‘God so loved the world that he did not spare his only Son, but gave him up for us all’ (Jn 3:16 and Rom 8:32).”244 In this way “The triune God does not appear

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240 Ibid., 506-507.
241 Ibid., 508.
242 Ibid.
243 Ibid., 509.
244 Ibid., 514.
onstage alongside other characters but in them.”

This allows the individual who has acquired their personhood through the reception and fulfillment of their mission to also discover and comprehend a theological meaning in their personhood. Balthasar concludes that it is “[i]n Christ, through grace, [that] creaturely man can become a (theological) person, that is, the Father’s child, who has been given a share in a qualitatively unique way in Christ’s mission; this takes place through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in him, whereby he becomes a dwelling place of the divine Persons (Jn 14:23; 1 Cor 6:19; Eph 3:17)”

Balthasar elsewhere expands on persons being the dwelling place of the divine Persons whilst affirming the limits to such an undertaking:

In that trusting self-surrender to God that we call the faith that hopes and loves, and which Christ performed on earth in an exemplary way, as our prototype (Heb 12:2), man both transcends himself and lives in Christ, or allows Christ to live in him: “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20). Loving, vibrant faith is the factor that assimilates us to Christ — “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith” (Eph 3:17) — which entails the indwelling of the “We” of the Trinity also (Jn 14:23, and so forth). It is pointless to try to make any further rational distinctions with respect to the particular divine Person involved in this indwelling: the attempt to do so loses sight all too quickly of the mutual indwelling of the divine Persons within the Trinity itself.

The pointlessness of enquiring further into the Divine Persons is not to affirm that there is a mystery so mysterious that it is devoid of meaning, but rather, that when the Church describes things as a mystery they do in fact contain a surplus of meaning. In the case of the Trinity this is infinitely so. Consequently, for Balthasar God is a mystery and he defends this view saying it is

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245 Ibid., 525.
246 Ibid., 527.
247 Ibid., 528.
“only in Christian revelation [that] this particular mysterious quality fully come[s] to light.”

He argues that “[t]he better we understand God, the more mysterious and unfathomable he becomes to our finite knowing.”

He explains that “in the encounter between two people who love each other we have a pale reflection of this state of affairs: this is how it should be.” This is because, for Balthasar, “however wide the dramatic acting area may become, we can have confidence that no abyss is deeper than God. He embraces everything: himself and everything else.”

It is this ‘pale reflection’ of ‘how things should be’ that we see in the recognition of each other’s humanity described in the school of thought followed by *Ubuntu*, and in the recognition of the *Imago Dei* in the Other espoused by Balthasar and in Christian anthropology more generally. Having identified the similarities between the two schools of thought, I now turn to consider the requisite rôle of the nature of freedom that is required to be exercised on the way from an individual conscious subject to becoming a person, and how this is important for Balthasar’s theo-drama and his consequent anthropology.

### 5.2 The rôle of freedom

I noted above that the process of moving towards personhood is tied to the degree to which our creaturely finite freedom is attuned towards the infinite freedom that belongs to God the Creator. We have also seen how Balthasar’s anthropology is essentially Christologically focused. This Christocentric anthropology, Chau argues “transfigures the modernistic notion of freedom as

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248 Ibid., 531.
249 Ibid.
250 Ibid.
251 Ibid.
pure choice. Freedom, and moral freedom, in particular, is often characterized as the human situation whereby one may choose between options”, but “in the case of theological ethics, the option is cast as a choice between acting according to God’s will or according to one’s own will.”

In everyday Christian piety one often prays in the Lord’s Prayer that ‘Thy will be done’.

Balthasar is examining here the freedom with which we can authentically choose God’s will over our own. As always, Balthasar examines this through looking at the person of Jesus. In doing so, Balthasar emphasizes “the aspect of [the] readiness to respond as [being] the meritorious aspect of Christ’s obedience. The merit of obedience lies in the willingness to risk intimacy rather than in the rejection of the choice to disobey.”

This ‘intimacy’ is, I believe, an occasion of revealing one’s true self. Just as friends might reveal more of themselves to other friends and so persons become more fully known to each other, and themselves, and lovers more still, God – who is love – desires to reveal God-self even more, such that with eyes and senses properly attuned one can truly find God in all things because God wants to be discovered, God wants to be in relationship with us. The deepest meaning of this mystery for Jesus is as a revelation of God’s mission in the Divine Persons – to recognize Jesus as the Son of the Father. It is in the revelation of our true authentic selves that we are truly obedient, and in being so, more perfect imitators of Jesus. Through this obedience and self-revelation, we are able to discover our own blessed belovedness to God and so with gratitude we might co-operate more fully with God’s grace in fulfilling our mission.

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Chau observes that “[w]ithin the Christian tradition, Balthasar recalls modern persons to the centrality of the theological virtues of love, faith, and hope to the expression of Christian personhood.” In embodying or incarnating these virtues we make ourselves more Christ-like disciples. Obedience is thus “the manner in which redemption and transformation are effected - first through Christ, then, by Christoform discipleship, in us.” It can therefore be argued that the theo-drama has a soteriological aspect to it, in that our salvation is found in our ever-deeper Christoform discipleship, but this salvation, like every good gift from God, can only be realized in freedom. I therefore propose to examine the type of freedom required generally to properly accept one’s mission, which is the pre-condition Balthasar argues for achieving one’s personhood. The type of freedom will have a specific form, and it is to this form that I now turn.

We have established that one can only accept one’s mission in freedom and this is worked out, for Balthasar, and, arguably, for Ubuntu too, dramatically. That is to say, in dialogue or in relationship to each other. Carolyn Chau, in her juxtaposition of Charles Taylor and Hans Urs von Balthasar explains that:

Balthasar clarifies the nature of the human person in the light of God in a way that neither dismisses nor unduly reifies culture’s emphasis and need for an aesthetic and affective dimension to faith. He does this through his articulation of human freedom and the Church through the analogy of a theo-drama.

The analogy of theo-drama shows how the movement of God within the divine drama, and of ourselves encountering God and thus becoming persons, is a kenotic movement. Chau explains

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255 Ibid., 161.
256 Ibid., 162.
257 Ibid., 149.
258 Ibid.
that: “[a]s kenosis is the way in which God gives himself to us, so our path to infinite freedom and on the way to true personhood is likewise kenotic. It is in our self-emptying that we become truly divine. For the logic of love is self-gift, [or] extension beyond oneself for the life of the other.”

Balthasar agrees that this kenotic movement is the principle of all love. The specific pattern of our freedom is thus a surrendering of our self to the other, the I to the Thou, the human to the Divine, the finite to the infinite. This is true also amongst individuals, but as Balthasar observes, there is also, “the strange separation between the understanding of human freedom in terms of the individual and then, in terms of community.” Moreover, such an understanding of finite freedom reveals “an incomplete understanding of God’s freedom apart from man”, not in the sense that God needs humanity, but in the sense that humans need God, both individually and communally.

Balthasar defined finite freedom as existing only in “the interrelationship of human beings”, since “each new human being comes about through other human beings and only awakens to ‘being human’ through the encounter with others, with their freedom and free response.” The interrelatedness inherent in finite freedom is also present when one contemplates infinite freedom, which is to say, one cannot consider either in isolation of the other: infinite freedom guarantees human freedom which was a gift in our creation. Finite freedom can only be fulfilled

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259 Ibid., 154.
260 “I.e. one can only attain a conception of man merely as an individual or merely as a community” Hans Urs von Balthasar, _Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory: The Dramatis Personae: Man in God_ (hereafter _TD II_), vol. 2 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 205-206.
261 Chau, "A Theological Interpretation of Catholic Witness and Mission in a Secular Age: Charles Taylor and Hans Urs Von Balthasar on Faith, Church, and Modernity", 156.
262 von Balthasar, _TD II_, 203.
263 Ibid.
in becoming obedient to God, or, as we described above, freely choosing God’s will over our own, and in so doing, being grateful for that freedom to exercise a free choice in the first place. In becoming consciously grateful for our finite freedom, we see the interrelatedness Balthasar spoke about because it recalls the infinite freedom by which our finite freedom was gifted to us.

Expressed differently, in order to appreciate this understanding, one must first acknowledge that our very existence requires us to be grateful to God. Chau explains that “[u]nderscoring the foundational pro nobis of divine freedom, and the development of true human personhood through a relationship of responsive self-gift to the divine, it becomes clear that God gives ‘the self’ to us as gift.”264 Thus, for Balthasar, “[w]hat happens through this radical redrawing of the full possibility of human freedom within a theodramatic horizon is that it clarifies that we are all, already within God’s divine life.”265 He explains that only “[o]nce we begin to see that our lives are the result of the gratuitous love of God,”266 will it become clear that “the fundamental ontology of all created existence is gift. All is given; reality is pure gratuity. Balthasar notes that any philosopher thinking about existence would have to acknowledge first the wonder of existing, its sheer givenness.”267 This entails that one is called to be grateful for one’s existence, one’s very self.

Chau notes that “[G]ratitude for the gift of self means ‘owning oneself’.”268 She clarifies that “Finite freedom, genuinely set free and equipped with its own sphere of freedom, cannot set

265 Ibid., 153. Emphasis mine.
266 Ibid.
267 Ibid.
268 Ibid., 156., footnote 303.
itself off in just any direction but must pursue the path of self-realization, that is, toward absolute freedom”\textsuperscript{269}, and I would add, personhood. She explains that “[i]ts coming forth (egressus) from its origin is the beginning of its return (regressus) there”, and that “this is not heteronomy but the only possible way in which finite freedom can imitate the perfect identity between divine freedom and divine being. This identity – the absolute affirmation of the absolutely Good or Holy – is its watermark, in virtue of which it is freedom. The watermark starts to become visible when finite freedom affirms itself, as a result of being addressed as “thou”; it can only be perfected when it has become “thou” in … God’s sight in its fully divine, absolute manner, when it has become identical with the ‘idea’ reserved for the finite ‘thou’ within the infinite ‘Thou’, within the eternal Word and Son.” (TD II, 291).\textsuperscript{270}

Contextualizing this insight within our broader thesis on \textit{Ubuntu}, we might say that one is also grateful for life, for existence and especially, for community. One can notice that there is also a similar kenotic disposition (the egressus), of going forth-from-one-self to the other, in order to discover or return to oneself (the regressus). In the words of \textit{Ubuntu}, one’s humanity is realized through the recognition of the humanity of the other. I would argue that both Balthasar, in his anthropology, and \textit{Ubuntu}, though coming from very different cultural backgrounds, address a common reality and a shared insight. In \textit{Ubuntu} this concept is realized through an insistence on a priority of the community over the individual, whereas for Balthasar, with Christ as the perfect exemplar, it is the Church, the Body of Christ, and the Saints who make up this community. These are the watermarks that Chau speaks of when she shows the perfect identity between divine freedom and divine being, when within the finite ‘thou’ one sees the infinite ‘Thou’. I

\textsuperscript{269} Ibid., footnote 303.  
\textsuperscript{270} Ibid., footnote 303.
propose that in this seeing, one recognizes the community of Divine Persons of the *Imago Trinitatis* in the community of persons in the community (the Church for Balthasar, or the community/society in *Ubuntu*) of Persons who bear the *Imago Dei*.

Why do I see a parallel between these two communities of Church in Balthasar and society in *Ubuntu*? It is because Balthasar has put forward a new idea of the Church. Chau recalls from Balthasar’s text *Love Alone is Credible* that his “idea of the Church, while orthodox and preserving of hierarchy, shifts its identity from a linear-top-down modality to one of circles of perichoretic existence, which places the heart of the Church in the heart of the saints, indeed, in the heart of Christ and emphasizes a spirituality of communion.”

I believe that these ‘circles of perichoretic existence’ offer a helpful model to see the powerful effect of Christ’s love, radiating from the center, to those nearest to Christ (the Saints), to the Church, to those beyond the Church - but not, importantly, beyond Christ’s love. In other words, one’s finite freedom can always be more attuned to the infinite freedom that is the absolute good, or God. The recognition is present in *Ubuntu*, similarly, where one’s relatedness to the other, is also perichoretic, or reciprocally interpenetrative, and is a recognition of one’s existence. And, significantly perhaps, the spirituality of community in *Ubuntu* includes the dead (the ‘ancestors’, who have a saint-like mediatory rôle in community) and those yet to be born. Grateful for one’s own existence and the existence of the other, community may form between persons more aware of each other’s and their own humanity. This understanding of *Ubuntu* contains the insight that Balthasar expresses

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271 “The sole credibility of the Church Christ founded lies, as he himself says, in the saints, as those who sought to set all things on the love of Christ alone. It is in them that we can see what the ‘authentic’ Church is, that is, what she is in her authenticity, while she is essentially obscured by sinners, and turned into a useless enigma, which as such deservedly provokes contradiction and blasphemy.” von Balthasar, *Love Alone Is Credible*, 122. Cited in Chau, "A Theological Interpretation of Catholic Witness and Mission in a Secular Age: Charles Taylor and Hans Urs Von Balthasar on Faith, Church, and Modernity", 149.
but in a language that is not tied to Christian anthropology. I believe that it makes a society conversant with *Ubuntu* receptive to a Christian anthropology that stresses the inherent dignity in each person because of the *Imago Dei* in each person. By pointing towards the *Imago Trinitatis* as the profoundest expression of this *Imago Dei*, one can also be supported in pointing towards the community as the fullest expression of the person, or that the person is only fully realized in community, as *Ubuntu* expresses.

5.3 Conclusion

Ultimately every individual’s mission is to become a full person in relationship with God. Chau notes that just “[a]s we have become persons in and through Christ, so, too, are we to invite others to the gift of such personalization. Through the love that is offered in the person of Christ through his Church, through the Church that forms persons, faith, love, and hope can transform the world.” ²⁷²

She explains that “[i]n the end, however, mission becomes immensely simple as Balthasar sees it: it comes down to a true faith that sets one free for loving service without need for self-defence, and for joy in that service.” ²⁷³

She explains that in Balthasar’s argument, “[w]hat arises from the total and complete following of Christ in and through his Church is the happiness of the neighbour, a sense of who she or he truly is” ²⁷⁴, because, she quotes Balthasar as saying: “the most significant thing in life that can

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²⁷³ Ibid., 213.
²⁷⁴ Ibid., 214.
happen to our neighbor is his being laid claim to and taken seriously as a person, an event that leaves on him the most lasting impression, a state that constitutes for him the source of the greatest happiness he can know on earth, in this above all lies the credibility of the Church, and the success of the mission of Christianity.”²⁷⁵ She has also argued that “the true expression of authenticity in person and existence and the height of creative self-expression lies in personal and communal relationship with God.”²⁷⁶ This personal and communal relationship with God is what defines us as persons, because it is in recognizing our belovedness to God, that we are related as sons and daughters of the Divine that we can therefore relate to all others as brothers and sisters and form a community. But this relationship is possible because of our prior relationship to God – the degree to which that is recognized is also the degree to which we belong to the community, or the Church.

I thus concur with Chau who concludes that Balthasar’s work provides “a substantive vision of Catholic existence through a retrieval of the Church’s relevance to modern persons in terms of sanctity, and the Church’s spirituality of communion”²⁷⁷ I further conclude that this spirituality of communion is to be found not only in Balthasar but also in the African concept of Ubuntu in a way that would allow the Balthasarian understanding to enhance and develop the African understanding of Ubuntu into a more fully-fledged Christian anthropology that holds human dignity and human relationships as pre-requisites and pre-cursors to any relationship with God.

²⁷⁶ Chau, "A Theological Interpretation of Catholic Witness and Mission in a Secular Age: Charles Taylor and Hans Urs Von Balthasar on Faith, Church, and Modernity", 221.
²⁷⁷ Ibid., 217.
There exists two similar problems in our world. Persons have lost their sense of belonging to a community, a true community that values them, and the Church, as a community, has moved away from emphasising holiness which ultimately impacts on one’s feeling of belonging to the Church. I believe that *Ubuntu* is a solution to the former, whilst Balthasar’s anthropology can “provide the answer of how Jesus meets our quest for authenticity (person as mission) and he also shows us how to be unified persons through community rather than individuals.”

Indeed, in its concern for ancestors and for those not yet born *Ubuntu* mirrors the Church’s similar concerns and sense of community.

In order to implement this solution, we need to be creative and aware of our need to be in relationship with God and each other. We must also recognize that in different cultures, we must describe our reality in ways that are culturally familiar and culturally sensitive. In Africa, I believe, *Ubuntu* offers such a way that can incorporate the full sense of Church, not only those alive, but those who have gone before us and those still to come. I would thus like to leave the last word to Chau who explains how this creativity, when joined in prayer, can lead to an authentic relationship and thus a true personhood in discipleship to our Lord. She writes that:

> we are called to live our creativity through obedience to the Father, which the Church as institution helps us to embody. We are challenged and invited by the Church to become who we truly are in God, which means that we offer all that we are and have to the Lord and invite him into our processes of discernment and daily life. We pray for a discovery of where our gifts meet the world’s greatest needs; we pray for a sense of how our lives can serve the kingdom; and, on a moment-by-moment basis, we cultivate our relationship of intimacy and trust in the Lord. The deeper the interior life in God, the more we are set free to love others with generosity, charity, and hope.

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278 Ibid., 231.
279 Ibid., 232.
Chapter 6 Conclusion

This thesis began with a contextualization of the problem of persons, noting that in the West there was a well-developed understanding of persons that was nonetheless shown to be impoverished due to an excessive emphasis on individualism. This was shown to be to the detriment of communities and an African contribution in the form of the concept of *Ubuntu* was proposed to enhance that understanding. It was further argued that the concept of *Ubuntu* itself could be enriched by assimilating aspects of Lonergan and Balthasar’s work. Within Balthasar’s work it was shown how individual conscious subjects become persons and that this attainment of personhood was also present in the concept of *Ubuntu* when younger individuals, through a process of initiation are incorporated into the larger community. Individuals who do not undergo this incorporation are said to lack their personhood. The contribution of Balthasar was seen to be towards a theological meaning of persons that also brought us to consider the Divine Persons in relationship within the Trinity, and in relationship to ourselves, and our consequent relationships with other human persons. With Jesus Christ as the archetype and exemplar of one who has a perfect relationship with the Father, we have a concrete example of one to imitate so as to become more like the *Imago Dei*. The question of what is it in the Trinity that makes their community perfect is thus found in the perichoretic relationships which are analogous to the sort of communities we are called to create.

In the second chapter I examined the understanding of person and community in the Western tradition and showed how the divine life, as a community of love, and consisting of pure relations and relationships of love is the de facto model on which human persons can base their own lives in community. In the third chapter I considered how *Ubuntu* contributes to Theology
and in particular the relationship between persons and community within *Ubuntu*. Issues of interconnectedness and interdependence of persons with one another were highlighted and the importance of *Ubuntu* to the African understanding of persons was discussed. The theological meaning of *Ubuntu* was explored in relation to the importance of life and how each life is always in relationship to the Community. It was shown how God’s love for us is the same dynamic that created us, because he loved us into life. All loving relationships should thus be life-giving. This positive African understanding is compatible with the Christian understanding of love and relationships that are life-giving. The primary form of community in the Christian context is, of course, the family, but the African understanding of *Ubuntu* was shown to lead to more inclusivity of the broader and extended family, and even to the entire community.

In Chapter Four I examined the work of Bernard Lonergan, in particular his exploration of understanding. I argued that his cognitional theory offered a substantial way of recognizing the other and thus can help in a more intentional experience of *Ubuntu*. Aside from a deeper intentional awareness of another’s humanity which would lead to a deeper intentional awareness of one’s own, I also explored the theological significance that inter-subjectivity and community – which in Lonergan’s terms result in a cosmopolis – might offer. For Lonergan the ultimate form of being-in-relationship is a being-in-love which requires authenticity and self-transcendence. We thus saw how *Ubuntu* is another way of naming self-transcendence from an African perspective. *Ubuntu*’s contribution was shown to be in the recognition and affirmation of our relationships.

The issue of projection and the argument of Karen Kilby against the use of Social Trinitarianism was noted but her solution of rendering the doctrine of the Trinity to become a second-order teaching was not relevant to the issue at hand and I posited that I desired to use the perichoretic
notion in an analogous way, and not as an exact model. I affirmed Christ as the perfect archetype and example of one who is in perfect relationship to the Father, the exemplar and model of all human imitation of God. In seeing the *Imago Dei* in the other, one could form a relationship and so help to build community. It was argued that this community of love is modelled in an analogous way on the Trinity such that the image of God was more properly the *Imago Trinitatis*.

The last chapter focused on the Trinity and an explanation of the theological meaning of persons. From Balthasar’s acknowledgement that individual subjects of consciousness attain personhood through the recognition of ourselves as beloved of God, our personhood, therefore, is dependent upon our recognition then of selves as created, or loved, into being by God who is a community of three persons. The theological meaning of these persons was further explored in Balthasar’s theo-drama and the rôle of freedom was emphasized. Our imitation of God has to be freely chosen, consciously aware of its unique presence within the theo-drama, and consequently in a continuous dialogue with God. This dialogue was shown to take the form of prayer, and for Balthasar the community in which one truly attains one’s personhood is the communion of the saints, those who have most conformed their lives to Christ, in the Church. The particular movement of the theo-drama involves a kenotic disposition and it was shown to be, at its heart, a movement of gratitude to God both for one’s creation and the blessing of belovedness. This gratitude I argued was present in *Ubuntu*’s attachment to life.

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280 I am indebted to Joseph L. Mangina of Wycliffe College, Toronto School of Theology, for pointing out to me that Karen Kilby’s objections to projects of this sort – namely, ‘a worry about the Feuerbachian projection of desirable human attributes, relationality, *ubuntu*, etc. onto the divine’ – are fundamental enough to warrant more attention and rebuttal, a point I accept, but due to limitations of space, I cannot properly do so here.
The thesis concluded by asserting that in African Societies where the concept of *Ubuntu* is deeply-rooted there is an opportunity to articulate the Christian mysteries of the Trinity and God’s love for the world and for each person created in the image of God. Balthasar’s notions of mission and identity were also discussed in terms of loving obedience arising from one’s gratitude for being loved or created into being. When this is consciously undertaken, one recognizes other persons in the community and thereby one attains one’s full personhood in an *Imago Trinitatis*.

### 6.1 Areas of future research

The areas of research I believe that still need development are: how can we take Balthasar and Lonergan further and help Balthasar and Lonergan speak to *Ubuntu*, which is still the most interesting forms of communalism, when we are dealing with a deeply flawed finite freedom.

Conversely, the idea of *Ubuntu*, i.e. the practical lived experience of *Ubuntu* with all its limitations and faults, can serve as a way of a deeper reading of Balthasar so that his thought does not remain only on a level of a highly beautiful abstract set of ideas. As some readers have felt wading through Balthasar, the danger is that he goes into ‘the stratosphere’ and is removed from human experience and has little to say about ethics or a way of living ‘on earth’ in the mess of our human relationships and sin. Although he argues, very persuasively, for an aesthetic starting point, he is so caught up in the drama, beauty and the art, that it becomes difficult in a sense to take Balthasar from the theatre to the township. Balthasar offers a contribution that helps us to clarify how our lived relationships could play out. But this requires a reading of Balthasar in a way that is not a marvelous collection of words that have little or no value, so that it does not become a beautiful macroeconomic system that does not penetrate into our lives. All great
economic theories, from Karl Marx to Adam Smith, work well on paper, but the jury is out whether either works in practice. Because when we get to the practical we need a method. *Ubuntu* and Lonergan can help with reading Balthasar so that the ‘in practice’ becomes more apparent.

Lonergan offers a brilliant system of thinking, but because of the detail he goes into, we miss the larger macro picture, and might lose the practical implications as well. This is remedied through the contribution of *Ubuntu*. For in recognizing myself, I also have to recognize the community in which we are all living.

Thus, in holding the three elements in complementarity together, we end with a vision of humanity that is open to God, respectful of our freedom, but aware that individuals become persons through claiming a rightful place in the community, which is ultimately the Church of holy persons, actors in relationship with Christ and in communion with God.

### 6.2 Pastoral Implications

To assess the relevance of this research for us today in South Africa. I would hope the work will make a contribution to the social and spiritual growth in Africa and elsewhere where the concept of *Ubuntu* is valued. One might ask: what are the three basic elements that we could engage? I would suggest that an answer to this question would involve using the language of beauty from Balthasar, the language of experience from Lonergan and the language of relationship from *Ubuntu*, and that this language of beauty, experience and relationship can contribute to a deeper understanding of the Triune God. How might I explain this to someone who is not familiar with academic theology?
If I could borrow an economic term as an explanatory metaphor, I would suggest that the beauty, truth and ethics of Balthasar contributes to a ‘macroeconomics’ of salvation which is shown through his own analogy of drama. In this element of drama, God is the director, and Jesus is the starring actor and all of us are the players – each of us an actor. We are not just robots repeating the lines that God gives us, because this undermines the reality of freedom, but given the fact that we cannot know the mind of the director perfectly, we have a very finite understanding of the freedom we have to act to play this rôle.

In this drama, in being directed and led by Christ, we are in a relationship with others created through the divine initiative. This relationship is rooted in beauty and leads to a deeper understanding of salvation as we uncover the truth and the underlying ethic of the drama.

In itself this would still make us feel very much like bit part players where we are in a one-man show and we are just supporting actors. Experience, on the other hand, is the key word for understanding Lonergan. Experience translates for us into a method that gives us the details as we fill in our parts in the drama. So, in including the insights from Lonergan and especially his stress on the rôle of experience in our understanding, we have moved from the ‘macroeconomics of salvation’ to the ‘microeconomics of salvation’, where we do not just play out our rôles, but we are able to appropriate those rôles as persons.

Moving into the realm of Ubuntu, and still thinking of how I might explain this to persons without any theological education, I would say that the essence of Ubuntu is relationality. Remaining with my metaphor, this relationality is also the ‘practical economics of daily life’ in which the drama has in a sense to be appropriated, interpreted and developed. In a sense it moves from the rehearsal stage where the director gives us all the instructions and tells us our parts,
where we have moved beyond the improvisations and particularisations of our parts, to give each
of our characters particularity and depth, and we have become actual characters in a living
drama. Relationality, then, is what holds together the human characters in the drama. Every part
is now important no matter how small the part. Relationality, then, is the lived experience.
*Ubuntu* is an example of the lived ethics of how this relationship is played out.

So, to summarise this explanation, we can refer to the three transcendentals: of beauty being the
essence of Balthasar’s contribution; of truth being the essence of Lonergan’s contribution
through experience; and goodness or ethics as the individual conduct in the Christian life, the
‘Way’, in which all of these elements are brought into performance in daily life. This way would
be characterized by goodness and relationality. In becoming good, one becomes holy and is
therefore a member of the Church amongst whom we relate. *Ubuntu* in a sense can be seen as the
ethical living out of the experience of the beauty of God.

### 6.3 Problems with this approach

There are problems of course with this analogy. Beauty in itself, from a purely aesthetic point of
view, is always difficult since Beauty is not always ethical. Experience tells us that our
relationships are imperfect, that our knowledge of the truth of God is limited, and that our
relationships are flawed.

If we consider how *Ubuntu* in South Africa runs the risk of being conflated into a
tribal/hierarchical model, where traditions and cultures are determined by those who rule, and
where indeed the appeal to *Ubuntu* itself is used as a form of moral proof-text to demand
conformity, this undermines or ultimately damages the relationships, and, to return to our
analogy, turns the people who are actors with freedom into cardboard cut-outs, giving truth to the flawed idea that God is pushing characters around a cosmic stage.

One of the most important things for engaging Balthasar, Lonergan and *Ubuntu* is to point out that that state of affairs does not have to be so. *Ubuntu* is essentially correct in that we obtain our personhood through the other, but taken alone, this means that we ultimately obtain our personhood by something other than God. In itself, though *Ubuntu* points in the right direction, including as it does elements of ‘being in communion’²⁸¹, which is the essence of our understanding of the Trinity and the Church. We are still however, suffering from a deficiency, which is the reality of sin because we have not analysed or responded to the dimension of experience. We have not thought through a method to see a better, more perfect relationship. A further reason is that because *Ubuntu*, at least in the Southern African context, is deeply related to the economics of living, we have the problem of what is the particular ethical criterion, this takes us to the ultimate ethical criterion, of how God relates in God-self in the Trinity. If that’s the case, we need to see how God interacts in God-self and how God interacts through beauty in our world. In a sense, this question is answered by Balthasar.

Balthasar and Lonergan speak to *Ubuntu* by offering theological insights that limits the dysfunctional elements of *Ubuntu*, by limiting hierarchism and practical inequality, just two side-effects of *Ubuntu* which has not yet been thoroughly researched. Contemporary literature on *Ubuntu* has not yet adequately considered the practical relations of *Ubuntu* relationships, and the problem of power in *Ubuntu*. Of course, this comes down to the issue of race. At the start of this work I explained the perspective I am writing from and anything written in South Africa is

²⁸¹ To borrow from Zizioulas.
intimately tied up with issues of race. White scholars of *Ubuntu* are cautious of offending sensibilities by being too critical and may feel vulnerable to being 'race-carded' off the field ('you do not understand you are white' a game-stopper). Black scholars are either too cautious to break ranks or may be so wedded to *Ubuntu* as an African system of thought that they do not want to look too critically at it.282 Ultimately, we must recognize our own powerlessness in relation to God, who is the great director of this drama.

282 This may be a classic example of the dialectic between power and knowledge as espoused and popularised by Michel Foucault (1926-1984), where knowledge is a form of power and power determines knowledge.
Bibliography


