

The Fragility of Consciousness: Faith, Reason, and the Human Good. By Frederick G. Lawrence. Eds. Randall S. Rosenberg and Kevin M. Vander Schel. Lonergan Studies. University of Toronto, 2017. Pp. 456. \$95.

Consciousness is fragile because it is conversational; we have our world by word and cannot escape the fragile circle of becoming authentic through conversation and becoming capable of conversation through authenticity. In the West, the “conversation that we are” (192, 240, 382) is now carried on in cultural languages that foster truncated or immanentized or alienated apprehensions of what it means to be human, and devalue the currency of Christian language.

Lawrence’s trenchant analysis of modernity may be somewhat cryptic to readers less familiar with the sources. He traces a sequence of declensions, drawing on Leo Strauss’s hypothesis of modernity’s “three waves,” and Lonergan’s accounts of consciousness and the structure of the human good (the illustration of the structure [328] is incorrectly formatted; see Lonergan, *Method in Theology* [1972], 48). The originating question for philosophy regards the right way to live; to answer it, the ancients backed into metaphysics. The classical *conversatio civilis* eventually collapsed into a classicism fascinated with logical techniques but neglectful of the subject. The early moderns replaced love of God with fear of death, thereby truncating subject and commonwealth alike. Rousseau’s critique of the bourgeois subject, “the first great assessment of the damaged existence” of people socialized to confuse personal worth with market value, took refuge in an immanence solidified by Kant’s doctrine of human dignity—hence Western liberalism’s two chief languages: commercial democracy’s utilitarian individualism, and the expressive individualism of social compassion. Relative to this, L. describes the distortion of money. The modern turn to the subject mistakes the subject for object. The postmodern reaction attempts to recover originating freedom in a universe that has become hostile and godless, but fails to adequately differentiate freedom from arbitrariness and so cannot defend the “conclusion that *all* standards of meaning and substantive order are relative in the last analysis” (339; see 237–44, 338–41, 361–65). L. speaks of a postmodern language of alienation, but sometimes implies two dialects, benevolent and malevolent. A generous dialectician, L. comes and goes in peace, correcting errors without constructing arch-villains. I find the analysis highly illuminating. It does not pretend to explain everything, but some may nevertheless feel it a “grand narrative” disconnected from questions of the moment.

Theology as political fosters authentic conversation about the right way to live. For this, a therapy is needed, because modern/postmodern “languages have invaded us” (343). Hermeneutic philosophy may help, and L. traces its development from Heidegger through Gadamer to Bernard Lonergan. In its orientation to language and meaning, philosophical hermeneutics breaks from the model of consciousness and knowing as perception, and shifts attention from intentionality and objects to the whole field of consciousness. Its heart is the recovery by Gadamer, and still more fully, Lonergan, of the Augustinian *verbum cordis*, which brings into light our intrinsically dialogical relation to the world and the compenetration of the truth of existence with the truth of judgment. L., who inhabits thoroughly the thought of both, deems Gadamer

“a master in his own right” (44), but finds Lonergan more adequate on consciousness and judgment. Postmodern techniques of deconstruction and genealogy reveal the ethical importance of an articulation of rational judgment, which alone moves conversation forward without power or trickery, and enables us to know and honor the other.

Higher still than the recovery of truth is the recovery of worship, loving self-surrender to God “in a friendly universe” (271) where freedom is not arbitrary projection but creative care within a meaningful whole, and finitude and contingency are not confused with sin. Lonergan was able “to reformulate the structural dynamics of history in ... conversational terms” (381) by transposing his recovery of Aquinas on cognition and grace from faculty psychology to an intentionality analysis articulating the transcendental notion of value and the dynamics of development “from above” (i.e., the existential primacy of love: *crede ut intelligas*) and “from below” (i.e., the path from inquiry to commitment) (see esp. 213–18, 380–82, 392–96). L.’s interpretation of Lonergan stands out from many others by its suppleness and intimacy with the underlying sources and questions.

L.’s central theological concern is friendship with and in Christ, the intussusception of the conversation that we are into the conversation that God is by the missions of Word and Spirit. Thus, he proposes a trinitarian foundational theology of Christian friendship and conversation. His theology of Christian friendship is tantalizing but underdeveloped. Though L. differentiates nature from grace, he plainly does not assign philosophy to one compartment and theology to another; but theologians may feel the philosophy here more fully elaborated than the theology.

I have been writing as if this were a monograph. In fact, it is a collection of essays. That makes for a few repetitions—though mostly not verbatim—and a compact style with a lot going on and touching many more figures and topics than I have named. L. has been an occasional writer, which makes him difficult to study and dampens his voice—pities this volume may help remedy. He is, however, a coherent and penetrating thinker. The editors have skillfully chosen and ordered essays that do that coherence justice.

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Glaube: Das Verständnis des Glaubens im frühen Christentum und seiner jüdischen und hellenistisch-römischen Welt. Eds. Jörg Frey, Benjamin Schliesser and Nadine Kathrin Hager. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017. Pp. xxv + 957. € 219.

Faith is one of the central tenets of Christianity; thus, it is a subject of much inquiry. *Glaube (Faith)* is a collection of essays dedicated to it; however, it is not a general work on faith but is composed of distinctive inquiries regarding the historical contexts of the concept of faith. This collection contains thirty-two essays of which six are in English and twenty-six are in German and they are from a conference that was held in Zurich during the Spring of 2012. The focus of the conference is indicated by the