

Just Watch Me? Just Watch Lonergan¹

I concluded the sixth essay of this series with the words of my title here, “just watch me,” famous in Canada from Premier Pierre Trudeau, who was facing a militant crisis in Quebec. His follow-up was to declare martial law, bringing in the troops. What of my use of them? I suspect that the use at the end of the sixth essay caused a stir, and for some had the air of a declaration of war. But no: they are used in a range of quiet meanings and with various twists of method and humour.

One broad meaning comes out of the previous essay by James Duffy: then *me* refers to me, Phil McShane, and the recommendation is to watch, pay some attention, to what I have been puttering round and about since the summer of 1966, when Lonergan introduced the character of the eight specialties to me, talking his way round his eight outstretched fingers. He began by saying “Well, it’s easy: you just double the structure.” Easy, yes, like *easily* in that famous last paragraph of the fifth chapter of *Insight’s* beginning-claim “The answer is easily reached.”

I have made a few attempts at functional writing in the past 50 years without really breaking forward. The break forward is in fact to be a huge communal cultural shift. The point is made pretty clearly by Duffy.

¹ These next two essays have a precise focus and a precise intention. Certainly, they are addressed to everyone interested in progress. But they are posted here prior to June 2016, addressed in particular to the group that is to gather on June 25, 2016 at the conclusion of the 43rd Annual Lonergan Workshop. The gathering of leading Lonergan students has a focus on an updating regarding Lonergan studies in general. The issue I raise for each of the group is posed in the question, “How do I effectively stand on the issue of functional specialization?” The preferred context for taking that stand is the final 16 lines of *Method in Theology* page 250, but one can expect little more than a random reaching on that Saturday. The full context of my challenge is the six *Lonergan Gatherings* essays that appear on my website on March 1st.

So I won't go on here with a lengthy follow-up on his essay. What I wish to do is note a precise functional meaning to the words "just watch me": first a broad meaning, then the precisely-located Lonergan meaning.

In the broad meaning, *Me* is anyone trying to work—and at present, all of us stumblingly—in one of the specialties. Or just working in Lonergan studies. My view—and many of you agree with me—is that Lonergan's achievement is a massively complex business of picking up on and stepping past Aquinas in the light especially of modernity.

So: we have to watch out in order not to underestimate him in our own efforts. But there is the question of collaboration, raised abundantly in the final dozen pages of *Insight*. We need to watch each other's efforts collaboratively and critically, in the usual manner that prevails in scholarship.

We come to the precise meaning to which I call attention. Part of Lonergan's achievement is that he gives a subtle and powerful meaning to that watching in the final 16 lines of page 250 of *Method*: lines 18-33, which I have called his *1833 Overture*. It is a global overture that is to lead to a quite different view of human inquiry, one I have described in *Futurology Express* and, in its Christian reality and hope, in *The Allure of the Compelling Genius of History*. But skip past me, as most of you have done alas. The problem is, are you trying to skip past Lonergan?

So perhaps I can come back to that statement of Pierre Trudeau, "Just watch me." I reduce the watching of me to a plea to listen to me during a single meeting, the Boston Saturday Gathering on June 25, 2016, which ends the workshop. I appeal to the group to watch those sixteen lines of *Method in Theology* that I have called his *1833 Overture*.

So, yes, skip past me and my odd writings in your reportings and discussion of June 25, 2016: but are you once again going to skip past Lonergan's brilliant systematization of communal self-criticism? Then surely, some few might

conscientiously pick up on Pierre Trudeau's moves in a crisis that is way deeper than his Canadian crisis was. And the crisis, curiously, goes back to that same year of Trudeau's moves: 1970. The Lonergan gathering of 1970 neatly glided past his magnificent redefinition of human inquiry in *Gregorianum* 50(1969), which contained a pretty clear elementary glimpse of the functional collaboration that was his discovery of 1965.