

Posthumous 13

Rewriting *Method in Theology* chapter 4: "Religion"

The final footnote in *Posthumous* 11 described briefly the task of the rest of 2013: nine essays ending with my attempt, *Posthumous* 21, at rewriting the chapter on religion in *Method*. It seems best to begin the enterprise very simply, avoiding a whole complex of associated difficulties. Still, my *seems best* can be modified to step helpfully into part of that other world of complexity by divertingly recalling a Lonergan's *can best*. "The problem of interpretation can best be introduced by distinguishing between expression, simple interpretation, and reflective interpretation."¹ That is the beginning of the powerful third section of *Insight* chapter 17 which climbs mercilessly to the vision in canon 2 of hermeneutics, where the result of our task might "fuse into a simple explanation."² If you are disconcerted by the simplicity of my effort here and in this sequence of essays, then certainly you can take Lonergan's higher road in handling the problem of a suitable interpretation of the fourth chapter of *Method*. Perhaps, in 2014 and beyond, we may do it together?

In the terms of that section of *Insight* chapter 17, is my interpretation in these next essays to be a simple or a reflective interpretation?³ Let me – and perhaps you – leave that question aside for the moment and ... simply putter forward.

My idea in *Posthumous* 10 is an apparently simple one. It involves using Lonergan's layout, in five sets, of the special categories, as a way of restructuring the stuff on pages 101-124 of *Method*. Certainly, you might try this yourself, and I repeat that invitation below. Indeed, that is just a repetition of the suggestion of the final footnote of *Posthumous* 11, where I point to the fact that such an effort would lead us together towards a fruitful beginning of the 1833 Overture. The effort would and will convince us of the difficulty of ourselves saying luminously

¹ *Insight*, 585.

² *Ibid.*, 610. These are the concluding words of the second paragraph of that second canon.

³ I regularly point to the laughably remote meaning of the paragraph where Lonergan writes of the conditions of reflective meaning (*Insight*, mid-586). It seems to be Lonergan's slick way of raising the pace of the entire section.

what Lonergan proposes about religion in the expression of that chapter, the difficulty being displayed in the way each of us diverge from him and each other in meaning and expression.⁴

Enough! Let us go back, or forward, to the *seems best*. Can I, can you, can we, somehow shuffle the content of the nine sections of *Method* chapter 4 into five sections suggested by the five sets given in the pages 290-91? Well, here I go with further pointers.

First, I recall the 5 sets of special categories:

1. The individual's shift in religious meaning;
2. A sharing with community;
3. The sharing lifting the community to the topic of source;
4. The issue of authenticity;
5. The issue of progress in the full story.

Next, a major point.

The individual Lonergan is expressing here patches of his religious meaning and shifts in it, but that is not our focus, as yet. Let us putter towards some collecting of bits of Lonergan's chapter to help us find our smaller focus, our five bundles of points.

All along here I must remind you, me, us, of the difficulty, Lonergan's difficulty, my difficulty, your difficulty, of finding and expressing a focus. It is the long story of *The Song of Songs*, the Symphony of history, the seed of OM, of home, clasping and cherishing hiddenly each human's poise, each piccolo tuning to the melody of being's invitation.

Here, hear, it takes me days to move from paragraph to paragraph. How am I to express my present shifting Trinitarian tuning to being, sitting typing a typing in

⁴ The 1833 Overture challenge of *Method in Theology* 250 haunts us here, calling us to the spiraling mentioned in the final note of the present essay.

collaboration with Them and you? Plainly – what a quaint word!⁵ – I am in number one in our list of five, “the individual’s shift in religious meaning,” leaning into number 2, and I would remind you immediately - now now! now now now – of my alternate title, “allurexperiences,” to the chapter on religion, and of my previous musing about it.⁶

Listen now, perhaps (now)^{3, 7} to Lonergan stumbling into the chapter: “the possibility of inquiry on the side of the subject lies in his intelligence, in his drive to know what, why, how, and in his ability to reach intellectually satisfying answers.”⁸ This is very far from the primitive subject’s allurements e.g. by “the shadow of the moon.”⁹ Is that shadow’s lure anything “more than a subjective satisfaction?”¹⁰ The primitive has sidled or sprinted back to her¹¹ cave companions, pointing, waving, wailing, and rhyming: do such pointings “reveal the so-called gods of the moment,”¹² “the moment in the rose garden”?¹³ The

⁵ I deliberately use this word from the beginning of a paragraph on page 7 of the first chapter of *For a New Political Economy*, CWL 21. The sentence there reads “Plainly the way out is through the more general field.” We would be in the same problematic in the first chapter of the rewrite of *Method in Theology* or of *Insight and Faith*. That first chapter of CWL 21 is quite beyond the 21st century. See the final note in this essay.

⁶ See *Posthumous* 11, “Allurexperiences”.

⁷ The strange bracket-pointer is perhaps familiar by now, but not commonly by (now)³, unless you are in the strange world pointed to by the quotation at note 17 below. Think now of the difference between Ignatian discernment, and the luminous discernment of discernments of discernments required in the frontline workers of the 1933 Overture: such is the meaning of (discernment)³. Such is the discernment required in thinking (now)³.

⁸ *Method in Theology*, 101.

⁹ I am thinking of Dogen’s verse and its context in chapter 3 “Haute Vulgarization,” of my *Lack in the Beingstalk. A Giants Causeway* (Axial Publishing, 2007): it is given in Japanese and English at the bottom of page 73, where I wish the reader “to mesh it in heartspocket with Tennyson’s” six lines that flowered in the crannied wall. “To what indeed shall I liken / The world and human life? / Ah, the shadow of the moon, / When it touches in the dewdrop / The beak of the waterfowl.”

¹⁰ *Method in Theology*, 101.

¹¹ She is a member, perhaps, of a primitive matriarchy, but one might think of that matriarch of music Nadia Boulanger with creative hints for later generations of composers and conductors. This topic of creative hints is the focus of the next essay, *Posthumous* 14, “Double You Three in His Story.”

¹² *Method in Theology*, 108.

pointing may live or die in “community, existence, and history,”¹⁴ be the pointer the primitive in an early cave or Pound in his final Canto: “I tried to make a paradiso terrestre.”¹⁵

You see – or I nudge you now to pause and seize – that we have compactly swept through the five sets or headings in a weave of layers. But notice that the compact sweep regarding allurement is luminously clouded¹⁶ by my perspective, perhaps shared by you. “To speak thus of allurement pertains to the stage of meaning when the world of interiority has been made the explicit ground of the worlds of theory and of common sense.”¹⁷ I am here quoting – and misquoting – Lonergan’s comment near the end of the third section of that chapter four, the section on religious experience: to have the original text you must replace “thus

¹³ T.S. Eliot, “Burnt Norton,” *The Four Quartets*. “Other echoes / Inhabit the garden. Shall we follow?” Again, I refer to the third chapter of *Lack in the Beingstalk*, and my strange question, “how did we get from our secret garden to secret police?” (p.75). See further, in that chapter of *Lack in the Beingstalk*, section 3.4, “The Field and the Garden” and section 3.5, “The Field, Foreign and Friendly,” and flow into the quest of the final note of this present essay, flow viscously into effectively (willing)³ “the freedom of consciousness itself” (I quote the concluding sentence of Lonergan’s lecture on art, *Topics in Education*, CWL 10, 232).

¹⁴ *Method in Theology*, 79.

¹⁵ I quote here from a final version of Ezra Pound’s *Canto* 117. My previous reference to that piece of Pound is in *Cantower* 5 (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/cantower5.pdf>), written ten years ago as part of a series of 117 **Cantowers** inspired by his efforts. *Cantower* 5 is titled, “Metaphysics THEN”, the capital THEN being a scream for effective fantasy towards a molecular expectation of the unexpected in both ontic and phyletic growth. The opposite is the deadly stale grip of “the usual” closed off from the Claspings Cherishing Call to a paradiso terrestre. The issue of a terrestrial paradise lurks in Lonergan’s comments on future gardening in his 1942 essay, “For A New Political Economy” (see CWL 21, 20), and was raised quite clearly at the end of his 1935 essay, *Sketch for a Metaphysics of Human Solidarity*: “they shall turn their swords into ploughshares and their spears into sickles. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation: neither shall they be exercised any more to war’ (Isaiah, 2: 4). Is this to be taken literally or is it figure? It would be fair and fine, indeed, to think it no figure.” My focus in the paragraph above was on aesthetic allurement. The radiant allurements of the realms of the social and the solitary, of the scientific and the sexual, of selling and succoring, are to be topics in later essays. Axial structures of religions and secularisms tend to maul these realms in the name of securities and sin. [Enough SS in my sentences, perhaps, to stir up a scowl or a smile?!]

¹⁶ I am recalling here the title of a relevant essay of mine, “*Insight after Forty Years: Towards a Luminous Darkness of Circumstances*” (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/archive2.pdf>).

¹⁷ *Method in Theology*, 107.

of allurements” with his “of the dynamic state of being in love with God.” You notice, but how much have you noticed? Have you noticed the partial presence or the serious absence in yourself of the luminosity in question, in you, “Question of God” in “Self-transcendence,” in “Religious Experience”? Are you in the shocked state of noticing that the speaking Lonergan is talking about “is elitist”?¹⁸ “One has not only to read *Insight* but discover oneself in oneself.”¹⁹ But even without deep shock you surely can now notice, in this rambling reading of what might well have been the first chapter of the missing 1952 volume, the hidden agony and tragedy of Lonergan’s claim that – having regarded and guarded oneself thus “on the level of one’s time”²⁰ – “from such a broadened base one can go on to a developed account of “the question of God, of religious experience, its expressions, its dialectic development.”²¹

Lonergan’s agony and tragedy was that he **could** go on to a developed account. It would, could, have been the first chapter of *Faith and Insight*, but now in the new context that he so bewilderedly yearned for as he typed the second-last section of *Insight* chapter 20.²² Our agony, our repentant joy,²³ should be to make way, *hodos*,²⁴ for a community that, in later millennia, will tower gently over, and

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 351.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 260.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 350.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 287.

²² The word *collaboration* occurs over thirty times in those ten pages.

²³ I am recalling *Insight* 722, which begins with the topic of repentance and ends with the topic of joy.

²⁴ Might I write (*hodos*)³, thus recalling the reach of note 7 above, (*above*)³? What, indeed, if I put all of *Insight* in such brackets, or all of the New Testament? That would put those words in the clasp, the Clasp, of generalized empirical method as described on the top of page 141 of *A Third Collection*. What, then of the *hodos* that Jesus is (John 14:6)? (*Jesus*)³? The word is worth chasing through the New Testament – a lexicon, such as my old Thayer 1885 translation of Wilke and Grimm, facilitates the exercise, especially if it becomes a (*lexicon*)³ – with the new luminous darkness of a cyclic *hodos*. “To rise in the world he carried a hod” (chorus of the song *Finnegans Wake*) becomes a spiraling echo of *The Song of Songs*. So we are to follow Jesus in a new covenant of contemplation, each of us, who labour in the Tower of Able, “a quite different foundation” (“Theology in its New Context,” *A Second Collection*, 63). I turn to that topic in *Posthumous* 14, “Double You Three in His Story”.

weave aesthetically into, plane plain meaning, solving “the problem of general history, which is the real catch.”²⁵

So we have our little shot here at sod-turning, text-turning, page-turning. Might I leave it to you – a beginning of communal effort – to have your own little shot at pushing on, in? You have to try my curious experiment with some belief; but it can, of course, be attempted in cynicism: what is this odd move to shift Lonergan’s nine sections of chapter 4 into these five sets borrowed from the chapter on foundations? Let us leave **that** question aside until we have attempted some elements of the odd move.

Clues to that odd move? You will find that the first three sections – apart from that discomfiting aside of Lonergan at the end of section 3 – hover over the subject – contemporary mixed with primitive – moving in or towards community: so set 1 and set 2. Section 4 in the chapter give points on the story of the expression, and section 5 adds some more nuanced points. Sections 6, 7, and 8 weave around the same problem of subject and subjects reaching for expression. Where precisely, however, are the shadows of sets 3, 4, and 5, shadows of a culture coping with sources, “community, existence and history”?²⁶ One finds such shadows especially as one descends page 113, but then the turn of the page is a turn to Lonergan with his large aside, one that he picks up on in his final section 9.

And what clue might we get from, or about, the seventh section, titled *Faith*, by reaching round in memory? Is there a shadow of a larger view that might have been given in a first chapter of the same title in *Faith and Insight*? There is, I would say, a wonderful clue regarding continuity, discomfiting to distinguishers of earlier and later Lonergan.²⁷ The section begins “Faith is the knowledge born

²⁵ *Topics in Education*, CWL 10, 236.

²⁶ *Method in Theology*, 79.

²⁷ Obvious I raise a large and delicate question here. Might I ask, cheekily: if you have not crossed the “bridge” (see the beginning of *Insight*, chapter 5), nor entered the beginning of metaphysics (see section 9 of *Insight*’s chapter 15), nor ventured at sweaty length into the “sixty three articles in a row” (*Grace and Freedom*, CWL 1, 94) in the *prima secundae* of Thomas, that meshes consensus with sense, how can you talk intelligently of a leap to a later

of religious love.” We are not far here from the joys of the “thirteenth place” in *Insight* chapter 20, with the universe and all of good will in love with God.²⁸ “In the light of faith, originating value is divine light and love, while terminal value is the whole universe.”²⁹ Indeed, we are not far from the high point and pointing of Lonergan’s earlier *Analysis Fidei*, where the leap of the subject is to the mystery of a word and of a till-then hidden speaker.³⁰

But how far are we from Lonergan’s vision and his challenge, “one can go on”? How far from the message lurking in that visionary reach for a foundation that would lift the problem of history, not God’s problem but ours, into the answer of the Symphony of Christ, the mystical body? How far are we from

the treatise on the mystical body that Lonergan longed to see emerging: an integral perspective on the weaving sequence of understanding – more or less effective in history – of that incomplete reality. My identification of that full treatise with the meaning of *Comparison* and of the second canon of hermeneutics is more like the identification of a major twist in neurodynamics than the identification of the Higgs particle. It is not, was not, an anticipated shift.³¹

Lonergan’s identification of cyclic global collaboration as a context for discourse on allurement was not, is not, an anticipated shift. And so I have ended here, curiously, by quoting a previous effort of mine to hint at the central metadoctrine of that discourse’s evolution. Might we lift, shift up, that metadoctrine, subject-

Lonergan? It brings to mind the silly fellow at the Florida Conference of Easter 1970 who asked Lonergan, during the plenary question session, if he had discovered feelings when he read Scheler. Lonergan paused before remarking laconically, with his usual tone-climb, “I’ve got feelings too!” This was a supporting reason for my editing out questioners in “An Interview with Fr. Bernard Lonergan,” *A Second Collection*, 209-30.

²⁸ *Insight*, 721.

²⁹ *Method in Theology*, 116.

³⁰ *Analysis Fidei* dates from 1952. It is available in English translation in *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 20 (2002) 125-54.

³¹ Philip McShane, *Method in Theology 101 AD 9011. The Road to Religious Reality*, Axial Publishing, 2012, 34. The entire book focuses on the meaning of *Comparison* on page 250 of *Method*.

as-subject³² to subjects, and subjects to subjects, towards a more effective deeper salvific interiority, a fuller pilgrim twining into circumincession?

³² “Distinguish the presence of the subject through consciousness and the presence of the same subject through reflection or introspection: reflection or introspection renders the subject present as an object, as that which is intended, but this could not be were not the subject already present to himself through consciousness, as subject, as that which intends” (*The Triune God: Systematics*, CWL 12, 141). My quotation draws attention to the context of Trinitarian theology, although the topic, subject as subject, is more extensively treated in *Phenomenology and Logic*, CWL 18: see the index there under *Subject*, at the conclusion of the entries. I wish thus to draw attention to the problem in its fullness, which throws into our dialogue a larger **Field** (CWL 18, 199) context. The high aim of the dialogue of the 1833 Overture, which is to radiate round the cycle in later millennia, is a humility zoning deeper than the *moi intime* (see *Insight*, 495) towards an *eo magis unum* (see CWL 2, chapter 5, section 3) that echoes the Speaking and Listening of God.