

Posthumous 18

Beyond “Bolder Spirits” in the “Difficult and Laborious”

The quotation marks in my title point to the first two pages of *Method in Theology*, chapter one, and thus I bring us back, or forward, to the problem of re-writing that haunts these essays. Should I repeat here Lonergan’s blunt central challenge of *Method* 287? Certainly, from your sharing of my present putterings, there are now better statistics of it being read effectively by us in our caring about God becoming king. So here it is, something you might swing into your own version of the 1833 Overture. You recall where the challenge is expressed: at the conclusion of his list of expected categorical achievements of foundational persons.

Such differentiation vastly enriches the initial nest of terms and relations. From such a broadened basis one can go on to a developed account of the human good, values, beliefs, to the carriers, elements, functions, realms, and stages of meaning, to the question of God, of religious experience, its expressions, its dialectical development.¹

There is no difficulty in recognizing here the table of contents of chapters two, three and four of *Method in Theology*. But what of chapter one? I have too often recalled talking to Lonergan about this in 1966-7, the impossible task of writing the chapter. Leaving that aside, and the problem of other attempts dating from his scribbles and typings of 1965, note that he does not give any of the table of content of chapter one. What then of a developed account or revision of its content?

I anticipate now the mood, the ethos, to which I reach in the final 21st *Posthumous* essay that deals with the fourth chapter of *Method*: the revision is to be a revision of culture, and the account? “Certainly we intend, as Mr. Churchill modestly remarked, to give a good account of ourselves.”² Lonergan

¹ *Method in Theology*, 287.

² Lonergan, *For a New Political Economy*, CWL 21, 3.

would have given a good account of his inner word of “a far larger work”³ than *Insight*, had he been given the time in the mid-1950s. But now, sixty years later, a relatively adequate account has to be spiraled up stumblingly out of a revising culture.⁴ It has to be a new, third, way, beyond common sense, beyond the bolder spirits of science. “To work out the basis of such a third way is the purpose of the present chapter” was what Lonergan wrote on the second page of *Method*’s first chapter, but his second note there, and the text that goes with it, leave no doubt about the need for a first volume to the basis, “some such book as *Insight*.”⁵ The second volume of the mid-1950s is a relatively lost possibility: but would it have met the issue? It might well have bubbled up into an identification of functional collaboration, meeting his repeated cry for cosmopolitan collaboration at the end of *Insight*,⁶ lifting his dream of pure formulations into an operable realism in identifying an effective global cyclic dynamics of address. As he moved into the task then, might he not have hit on, been nudged to, a heuristic conception of the functional dynamic that would have lifted his vague hope of Cosmopolis to a heuristic of the genesis and cyclic maturing of “an audience that similarly grasps the universal viewpoint”?⁷ Indeed, would not the self-pushing that blossomed into the second and third canons of hermeneutics have lifted his molecules to the sparkling fantasy of a Kekule self-digesting snake,⁸ a solitary fuse that would light into a global “fuse into a single explanation,”⁹ a single Explanation in the crannied caul? He would not have been rushed to finish

³ *Insight*, 754, line 1.

⁴ I am somewhat at a loss here about the revising culture. As I pushed through these essays, musing all the time about some sort of “Spring Campaign,” my hopes for Lonerganism being part of that revision in the next few generations shrunk. So I ramble a little here regarding other roads, like the twist of history mentioned in note 11 below. My tentative decisions about the Spring Campaign are to be aired in note 17 of *Posthumous* 21.

⁵ *Method in Theology*, 7, note 1.

⁶ On the average there are three mentions per page in the ten pages *Insight* 740-750.

⁷ *Insight*, 602.

⁸ The Benzene ring story is just one regarding Kekule’s reveries, daydreams on bus rides. But I am just snaking around here with the contrafactual towards the musings above and in note 12. Such snaking suspicions will eventually be replaced in the full science of reversing counterpositions by a statistical penumbra of semi-lost possibilities.

⁹ *Insight*, 610, line 9.

Insight, and so perhaps he would have twisted into a new ending of his chapter on the possibility of ethics?

Here I pause in the delight of coincidence. *Cantower 18* was a commentary on Chapter 18 of *Insight*, and it ended with a new twist: the ethics of functional collaboration.¹⁰ The coincidence leads me to follow up the parallel by paralleling these last four *Posthumous* essays with the four *Cantowers*, *Cantower 18*, “The Possibility of Cultural Ethics,” *Cantower 19*, “Ultimates,” *Cantower 20*, “Intimates,” and *Cantower 21*, “Epilodge.” I am not going to stretch and strain the parallel: it simple gives me a neat way of ending my writing career – or, some might say, careening. If Lonergan had broken through in 1953 to functional collaboration as solving the problem of Cosmopolis, would he have followed through in the same way with the final two chapters of the book? Then, with or without those two final chapters, might he not have considered a three-volume work, with volume 2 extending his work on the concrete dynamics of human understanding into a consideration of the muddles and messes and their control, prior to an explicit turn to *intellectus quaerens fidem* and *fides quaerens intellectus*?¹¹ Might the collaborative lead bubbling out here not have echoed his musings of 1959 on Christian Philosophy?

So I am led to suggest that the issue which goes by the name of Christian philosophy is basically a question on the deepest level of methodology, the one that investigates the operative ideals not only of scientists and

¹⁰ Cantower 18, “The Possibility of Cultural Ethics,” raises various other topics such as a larger “Calculus of Variations” than that dealt with by Husserl under Weierstrass. That is a topic elaborated on in chapter 4 of my *Lack in the Beingstalk*, “The Calculus of Variations.”

¹¹ The Lambert-McShane Lonergan biography brings up some such question on pages 257-9. Here I give it a somewhat new twist. It is a twist related to the first chapter of my *Method in Theology: Revisions and Implementations*. The point regarding the middle volume is that Lonergan could plausibly have discovered functional collaboration in the mid-fifties and decided to treat it in some detail prior to moving into the focus on Faith. There is yet another twist: the discovery of functional collaboration through its needs rather than through its grounds in cognitional analysis – recall the conclusion to “Healing and Creating in History” – could ground the discovery of cognitional dynamics, for many, in functional collaboration.

philosophers but also, since Catholic truth is involved, theologians. It is, I fear, in Vico's phrase, a *scienza nuova*.¹²

Of course, there are many other possibilities, even for Lonergan, even if he had remained trapped in the Gregorian University. Imagine him, for instance, returning to his masterly work on economics producing, not the makings of *CWL* 15, but the brilliance of a work on functional collaboration in economics. There is a gap between the end of section 49 of *For a New Political Economy*, "The Financial Problem," and the last-named section 53, "Mechanism of the Cultural Expansion."¹³ At all events, the imagined volume 2 points, for me, to a spectrum of volumes, all pirouetting – or rather sloping – towards the white light of a common dialectic and foundations. Here, at any rate, is Lonergan's reaching before that gap in his 1942 typescript, a gap followed only by a few lines on cultural expansion.

Now to work out in detail under which this must be done, and to prescribe the rules that must be observed in doing it, is a vast task. It means thinking out afresh our ideas of markets, prices, international trade, investment, return on capital. Above all it means thinking out afresh our ideas on economic directives and controls. And if we are to do this, not on the facile model of the totalitarian or socialist regimes which simply seek to abolish the problems and with them human liberty, then there will be need not merely for sober and balanced speculation but also for all the concrete inventiveness, all the capacity for discovery and for adaptation, that we can command.¹⁴

I have rambled enough, perhaps, to warm some hearts. In the *Cantower* essays in which I reflected on chapters of *Insight* I generally did not aim at any serious coverage. The aim was always to lift those interested towards reading in a fresh manner. So, here, in concluding this essay, I follow that pattern: I invite a fresh reading of the introductory page and a half. In the final essay of the series I cut down that challenge of re-reading to the first five words of the chapter. That

¹² *Shorter Papers*, University of Toronto Press, 2007, *CWL* 20, 225, in a review of books on the possibility of Christian philosophy. See further, on this, note 6 of *Posthumous* 19.

¹³ *For a New Political Economy*, *CWL* 21, 106.

¹⁴ *For a New Political Economy*, *CWL* 21, 105-106.

conclusion of *Posthumous* 21 will warrant a review of what is written here and what you “think of” the introduction to *Method’s* chapter one.

However, I am not going to go on at any significant length, indeed all, on the content of these first four dense paragraphs of the book. Rather I invite a serious pause over them in relation to his later consideration of stages of meaning by inviting you to think of the first three paragraphs as somehow isomorphic to the three stages of meaning. The third paragraph’s “third way” can then be mused about in terms of the third stage of meaning. But all I wish to say here is that the third stage of meaning is to be a communal achievement. It is not, then, a matter of evolutionary sports like Aristotle or Aquinas or Lonergan: it is a matter of an effective Cosmopolitan shift. I am pushing, therefore, for your inner assertion, indeed an operative assertion, of an identification of the third stage of meaning with a respectably scientific establishment of global functional collaboration.