

## Posthumous 19

### “What is Good, Always is Concrete”

I aim at an impossible brevity of communication. The six words of the title, the beginning words of *Method* chapter 2, present a brutal challenge to present Lonergan studies in its facile flight from the neuromolecularity of the cosmic infolding<sup>1</sup> dynamics of the question, “what is good?” My strategy of networking these final four essays can serve to bring out admirably for you the ills of that reductionism. I have linked the four essays, 18, 19, 20, and 21, respectively [a] to the chapters of *Insight* of the same number; [b] to the *Cantowers* of the same number; [c] to the four first chapters of *Method in Theology*; [d] to the first four functional specialties [e] to the first four paragraphs of the first chapter of *Method*. My final ‘rabbit out of the hod’ trick is to let *Posthumous* 21 lead us to read the good news of the first five words of the first chapter of *Method*. Meantime, have you taken me, will you take me, seriously enough to do some explicit diagramming of my strategies?<sup>2</sup> Now place the whole mess inside the mid-

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<sup>1</sup> Here I have my quintessential word of communications-problem. It relates to Lonergan’s brilliant identification of energy with prime matter. The problem of explanation held me up for over forty years. With a community sharing the struggle, the road would not have been as long. On the topic of the identity of energy see *Axial Lonergan*, 178-88.

<sup>2</sup> My standard reference on diagram-needs is CWL 7, *The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, University of Toronto Press, 2002, 151, where Lonergan is magnificently clear on the need for diagrams reaching to details. See note 5 below. The references in the text above, and their interconnections, lead to an outrageous abundance of interlocking diagrams, all hovering round **W**<sub>3</sub>. But one simple effort of diagramming a paragraph-comment from *Cantower* 19 (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/cantower19.pdf>) would give a neat entry point: page 5 there draws attention to the parallel between the advances in the science of the neutrino and the advances in *Insight*’s treatment of God. One moves from section 8 – like the suspicion of a something called neutrino – to section 9: a complex hypothesis within Gauge Theory. One moves from a “small box” hypothesis to a “large box” hypothesis. Think of the boxes in relation to your understanding of God. What, honestly, is in your “large box”?

‘social box’<sup>3</sup> of the display of page 48 of *Method* and we are ready to roll, remembering the slogan “A Rolling Stone Gathers Nomos.”<sup>4</sup>

Have I disconcerted you with the task? Serious superficial control is a week’s focused work; serious explanatory and heuristic control is a matter of decades of adult growth and generations of spiraling. All this is quite disturbing for one who has not been bitten by theory.<sup>5</sup> But I wish you to think patiently of such a bite as a goaded leap in poise, in poosition, in character and in the flow, the river, of judgments of value.<sup>6</sup> In its fullness it places you, homes you into, the molecularity

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<sup>3</sup> “Institutions, Roles, Tasks”

<sup>4</sup> The reference is to the common title of two chapters in my popular writings: *Economics for Everyone*, chapter 5 and *A Brief History of Tongue*, chapter 3. These chapters deal, respectively, with functional collaboration in economics and linguistics.

<sup>5</sup> See *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-1964*, University of Toronto Press, 1996, CWL 6, 155, and add the context of CWL 6, 121. The topic is the plausibility of *haute vulgarisation*. There is little point at being more explicit or lengthier than Lonergan here, or as I climb towards the end of my efforts to get Lonerganism out of the “little ponds” of Lonergan’s conversation with me in 1961. Still, perhaps the suggested exercise of note 2 above might catch your attention? Again, the question is there to discomfort you, a summary of my efforts in these *Posthumous* essays to lead you to a word of God,  $G_{jk}^i$ , a word that is an enlargement of the “large box” of section 9 of *Insight* 19. So there can rise the startling question regarding your conversations with God: are you “lost in some no man’s land between the world of theory and the world of common sense”? CWL 6, 121.

<sup>6</sup> I might claim that here we reach the high point of self-searching in these essays. Yet it is so easy to notice the beginning of self-rescue by being honest about your reading of the stuff in chapter 2 of *Method* on Judgments of Value. What have you, had you, in mindful attention, when you read? It is a long road, and a communal road, to the cherishing luminously of your inner processions. Here too you can reach a core light on the nature of Christian philosophy. Recall note 12 of *Posthumous* 18, and Lonergan’s review of books on the topic of Christian philosophy. It is, of course, a vast subject. But the present reflection – and your personal task of striving to cherish the processions within you of evaluation – leads me to a simple **assertion** (that word again!). Quite simply, no school of philosophy really moves in this zone. Yes, they are to find their way into this zone, as the great world religions are to find their way (see note 31 of *Posthumous* 21). But embracing the embracing of embracings: that is being seeded by Christianity, especially in this next millennium, and it can become a luminous embrace of the Tower community, flowing to the streets, through its cyclic spiraling. The sad **assertion** of this *Posthumous* series is that its hope is not the heart of Lonergan studies, where the norm should surely be the Tomega Principle: “Theoretical understanding, then, seeks to solve problems, to erect syntheses, the embrace the universe in a single view.” *Insight*, CWL 3, 442. Do you not

of the slogan “A Rolling Stone Gathers Nomos,” your judgment of value toned into a slog-on cosmic ethos.<sup>7</sup>

You may well be asking, at this stage, such a question about my complex sketching as ‘how is he going to tie in the second functional specialty?’ as part of this reflection, this project of *Posthumous* 19. Well, thank you for asking: and I simply point you to the first sentence of the final paragraph of the chapter on the topic: “Is this a possible project?”<sup>8</sup> where the project, for “bolder spirits,”<sup>9</sup> is “not mere description but explanation,”<sup>10</sup> and indeed where one is, normatively, dominated by the concrete good, mediated by “UNDERSTANDING THE OBJECT.”<sup>11</sup>

One is dominated by the concrete good? All are dominated? Here we face, in this infancy of humanity, a serious entry into a global search for effective luminosity regarding, and guarding, its geno-dynamic future. That dynamic pragmatism is symbolized compactly in the image of The Leaning Tower of Able, but it has a panoply of sub-images to develop and a forest of faulty towers to invade. In the concrete, there is nothing detached about understanding the object, for all the airings of deluded sciences and journalisms and philosophies. Our deepest bent is towards “Remembering the Future,”<sup>12</sup> our most realistic what-questions are towards what-might-be.<sup>13</sup> The pure desire to know is in

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sense the Evaluative Trinity lurking there, here-now, no-where, at the heart of your judgment of value of this note?

<sup>7</sup> No harm here, following the previous note, in coming home to a ground assertion of Lonergan about the heart of your judgments of value: “Good will wills the order of the universe, and so it wills with that order’s dynamic joy and zeal.” *Insight*, CWL 3, 722, conclusion.

<sup>8</sup> *Method in Theology*, 173.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>11</sup> The title of the section on the first exegetical operation in *Method in Theology*, chapter 7, 156.

<sup>12</sup> “Remembering the Future” is the title of a chapter of J.M. Synge in Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland. The Literature of the Modern Nation*, Harvard University Press, 1995. The mood dominates in Cantowers 36 and 37. It is to be the mood of the Leaning Tower.

<sup>13</sup> Follow up the mood suggested by the previous note and re-read the message of the transcendental “be intelligent” on *Method* 53. Recall too Appendix A of CWL 18, regarding modal thinking. There is a massive nudge here to reconceive the normal and normative dynamics of human thinking-behavior.

molecular symbiosis with the poor desire to do, which so easily settles for some way-station good of order instead of for liberty's climb to the terminal value of eternal beauty's democracy. So, in the context of our "19 collection," it – the molecular muddle of pure and poor – "must lift its eyes more and more to the more general and difficulty fields of speculation,"<sup>14</sup> where speculation mirrors hope. Thus there is to be a fresh struggling – and is it not vestigially Trinitarian?<sup>15</sup> – against an axial superego towards seeing the tower-person in Person in the mirror, in the grace-light of the flickering luminousness of "critical method,"<sup>16</sup> which is to reveal "all that is lacking"<sup>17</sup> and make operative the collaborative dynamics that can live with the "piecemeal because questions of possibility are to be settled only by appealing to fact,"<sup>18</sup> and the appeal to fact lifts assertions into judgments of value.

So we come densely into the pragmatics of my present concern: that you pause to find the home of your reading of section 4 in *Method*, chapter 2, "Judgments of Value."<sup>19</sup> You may already be positioned and poised: weaving forward in the good that is an inner possession, psychically resonant. But you may not have climbed that far into being an evolutionary sport. "Judgments of Value" is, then, just the fifth last line of page 36 of *Method*, print in an open book, like Spencer Tracy's face in "Judgment at Nuremberg," out there like this print: which they are not. You may well, in this next decade, reconfigure book and face, trial and fact, Jill finding Jack through risky solo-leaps of inner assertions. But that communal climb to the concrete good suggests that we hold hands, being one in the Flower: it suggests that the neglected garden-plot of entwined collaborators calls and cauls to bring us to the edge of the Field.

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<sup>14</sup> *For a New Political Economy*, CWL 21, 20

<sup>15</sup> The search for Trinitarian vestiges, following Augustine and Thomas, haunts these *Posthumous Essays*. Will later neurodynamics find Trinitarian resonances in the chemistry of Id, Ego, and Superego?

<sup>16</sup> *Insight*, CWL 3, 708.

<sup>17</sup> *Insight*, CWL 3, 559. But think, too, of *John* 16:13 and the clasping craving Spirit.

<sup>18</sup> *Insight*, CWL 3, 706.

<sup>19</sup> *Method in Theology*, 36-41, just over four pages.