

Posthumous 20

Meaninklink

The beginning of *Posthumous* 19 gives my strange networking of these final essays. That networking serves to eliminate illusions about the value of summary treatment, condensed expression. Here I bolster the networking by drawing attention to a further relevant essay in our present context; we are brooding over the third chapter of *Method*, the 20th chapter of *Insight*, and my *Cantower* 20, but I add to the mix “The Fourth Stage of Meaning,” Field Nocturnes Cantower 44.¹

My title brings to mind the title of the third chapter of *Method*, and it serves, in its oddness, to focus our attention. The most obvious added meaning comes from the word inkling, which we meet – at least in Ireland – in the phrase “I haven’t got an inkling.”² In *Posthumous* 18 I suggested another conclusion to *Insight* 18, one that pointed to a new global glocal ethics of collaboration, and of it, it seems legitimate to say that “we haven’t got an inkling.” The third stage of meaning, a distant fantasy, is nowhere in sight. In *Insight* chapter 20, the solution to the problem of evil and stupidity is spelled out in the rich but thin heuristics of 31 assertions – all the thinner in that Lonergan had little clue then to the character of the meaninglink lurking in the optimistic claim about

a mystery that is at once symbol of the uncomprehended and sign of what is grasped and psychic force that sweeps living human bodies, linked in charity, to the joyful, courageous, whole-hearted, yet intelligently controlled performance of the tasks set by world order in which the problem of evil is not suppressed but transcended.³

¹ *Meaning and History in Systematic Theology. Essays in Honor of Robert M. Doran S.J.*, edited by John D. Didosky, Marquette University Press, 2009, at pages 331-344. (Also available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/FNC-44.pdf>)

² One lifts it into the larger context by moving into chapter 17 of *Insight*, where one is pointed towards effective linguistic performance within a luminousness regarding *Lack in the Beingstalk* (one of my book-titles). “Most of all, what is lacking is knowledge of all that is lacking, and only gradually is that knowledge acquired.” *Insight*, CWL 3, 559.

³ *Insight*, CWL 3, 745.

Linked in charity: but how, and with what how-talk about it and in it so as to arrive at effective implementation, a central feature of Lonergan's bent?

Way too many lines and links that might have been followed here but it is best now to clear up one large issue of meaninglinks. In the essay mentioned above I pushed forward towards some precisions regarding a fourth stage of meaning: it is important not to leave my musings dangling. I make no attempt to pick up on the drive of the article and its source in a common interest, with John Dadosky, in Catherine of Siena. Rather I lift the problem I had back into an older context, represented by the fourth chapter of *The Shaping of the Foundations*, with title "Instrumental Acts of Meaning and Fourth-level Specialization."⁴ Think, now, of the definition of generalized empirical method that emerged in the mid-1970s, presented on the top of page 141 of *A Third Collection*: subject and object as a balance of foci. This method is to be normative in the third stage of meaning, laced into the larger normative pattern of recurrent operations symbolized by the Tower of Able. But there is a normative oddness in fourth level functional specialization: there the specialist is somehow – into reaching, self-searching, for some incipient how-language of the *moi intime*⁵ – unbalancing that subject-object focus so as to mediate a self-revelatory development that would grow to be communal: the 1833 Overture of the searching specialist could be seen then as a self-focused blossoming into the transposition of such talk as that of Frank Hardy or Molly Sweeney.⁶ Think this out vaguely then, THEN: apart from strange hints regarding fermentings of linguistic feedback-reachings, is not the reaching involved an identifiable state of human living, seeded as evolutionary sport in oddbods like Socrates or Catherine of Siena or Upanishadic writers or Persian poets?

⁴ The book is available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/foundations.pdf>.

⁵ "The series of zones from the ego or *moi intime* to the outer rind of the *persona*." *Insight*, CWL 3, 495. The issue is human development and its tensions (497 ff), to which Lonergan returns in the conclusion of chapter 20, adding the complexities of the absolutely supernatural. (747-750)

⁶ Frank Hardy and Molly Sweeney are two characters from the plays – *Faith Healer* and *Molly Sweeney* respectively – of Brian Friel. A lead into their place in foundational searchings is given in *The Road to Religious Reality*, Vancouver, Axial Publishing, 2012, 18-19.

At all events it is this peculiar unbalance that has haunted me since the mid-1970s.⁷ But I do not think the unbalance is a ground for talking systematically of a new fourth stage of meaning somehow beyond the third stage. It is to be a front-line component in the collaboration of the third stage of meaning, and indeed it can be, should be – with a lag – spiraled into that collaboration over the millennia to come.

But now I wish us to pause over the fact that the previous and present paragraphs of this essay are written with the compactness of doctrines. The result, regularly, is a lightweight descriptive sharing of meaning. Meaninginklinking with you would be quite another matter. Let me illustrate this problem concretely. Lonergan wrote a brief chapter of *Method* on “Research.” It is like a signpost to a road untraveled, and it is all the more a failure when functional research is correctly conceived as a massively new venture. What is, and was, needed is “fantasy”⁸ and detailed creative messing. Such detailed messing was a key part of the seminar of functional research undertaken in 2010 by a group of eccentric Lonergan students. Lonergan’s couple of pages of inklinks were replaced by a volume of essays.⁹ If the lightweight inklinks of *Method* are to ferment into the third stage of meaning, an effective collaboration of these next millennia reaching 10,000 villages, 10,000 universities, then there needs to be a communal conversion to the humility of detailed integral understanding that puts an end to

⁷ I would note that, while the tensions mentioned in note 5 include tensions grounded in mysticisms, mysticism has not been my interest or my haunting in these years of searching. My interest and my entire focus have been on kataphatic contemplation, quite closely related to my interest in a piety that is “secular” (see note 22 of *Posthumous* 14). For broad introductory reflections on mysticism in its relation to prayer and theology see my five *Prehumous* Essays, 4 - 8, “Foundational Prayer” (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/prehumous.html>).

⁸ I am recalling now what was of central importance to me in the early 1970’s: sharing Marcuse’s view. It serves as a suitable lead-in to my final *Posthumous* essay. “Without fantasy, all philosophic knowledge remains in the grip of the present or the past and severed from the future, which is the only link between philosophy and the real history of mankind.” Herbert Marcuse, *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*, translated by Jeremy J. Shapiro, Boston, 1968, 155.

⁹ The volume of essays on functional research – by me but in a work of collaboration with a seminar group – appears as Volume 8 (2013) of *Journal of Macrodynamical Analysis*.

what, after all, is just the “pseudometaphysical mythmaking”¹⁰ despised by Lonergan but fostered by so many of his disciples.

¹⁰ *Insight*, CWL 3, 528.