

Posthumous 6

Pitch Perfect Beyond Lonergan

Of course, the culture represented by the recent film *Pitch Perfect*¹ is also beyond both Thomas and Thomism, but it was not beyond the pitchman Lonergan's final pitch-circle.² Lonergan, from before the mid-thirties, was reaching in strange cosmic hope for the lion and lamb to share the same lair, and in early 1965 he scribbled a burning page about his final pitch, his FS-harp, F[#].³

A fanciful pair of sentences those, yet I stand in them with Marcuse, and have stood with his demand for forty years: "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."⁴ On the other hand the Lonergan community stands solidly against

¹ The film, a light-hearted musical lifting *Glee* into the Campus, written by Kay Cannon and directed by Jason Moore, was showing in Vancouver in October 2012. One could wax further on the dynamics of collaboration etc. here. Gene Kelly is replaced by the Genodynamics of the Group. See notes 3, 4 and 5 below, leading to the key broad pointing of note 6.

² Technically, a pitch circle is a circle touching the teeth of a gearwheel at the points where they mesh with the teeth of another gearwheel. Varieties of metaphors can be developed here regarding the effective implementation of metaphysics in the cyclic dynamics of functional collaboration.

³ The page is reproduced on page 160 of the book referred to below in this note. The F[#] reference weaves in metaphor, "revised and contracted myth" (*Insight*, 569, line 1), to nudge stale molecular patterns through a type of catalytic overdrive. So, an attentive listening to the climb of Sophia Gubaidulina's *In Tempus Praesens* to its final F[#] can be sensed as paralleling the strange weave of Lonergan, through his too-familiar notes, to his final FS. I write of this in the Preface to Pierrot Lambert and Philip McShane, *Bernard Lonergan. His Life and Leading Ideas*, Axial Publishing, 2010, p. 15. The listening lift is all the more powerful if the Deutsche Gram 2008 version (London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Valery Gergiev) is available to you, a recording in which Anne-Sophie Mutter plays Bach Concertos before leaping -- Thomas to Lonergan? -- into the Gubaidulina work, which "obeys the impassioned desire to develop" (I am quoting here the notes to the recording, "Safeguarded by Sophia", by Selke Harten-Strehk).

⁴ Herbert Marcuse, *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*, translated by Jeremy J. Shapiro, Boston, 1968, 155. At that stage I was only beginning to glimpse the dynamics of neuromolecular patterns and was decades away from thinking out the problem of a stale axial superego. (On the axial superego, see *Humus* 2, available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/humus-02.pdf>).

fantasy and Lonergan's final pitch.⁵ What do I have to do to change the score, so that we tune in, pitch-circle, following Lonergan, to the lonely and hungry crowd, American teenagers and African children, Asians and aboriginals?⁶

⁵ My Webster New World Dictionary gives 16 main meanings to the word *pitch*. A dominant meaning for me here, not listed there, is the simple meaning of *pitch* as *playing field*: perhaps it is just an Irish usage? Then one may go on to think of Lonergan's outreaching in his use of the word *field*: "The field is the universe, but my horizon is defines my universe. The field regards metaphysics as such, but the horizon regards metaphysics as possible-to-me, relevant-to-me." (*Phenomenology and Logic*, 199: see also the index there under *Field*). More on the "unknown end" of metaphysics in note 11. And there are a host of other nudges that could be followed in a type of aesthetic journalism. There is, for instance, pitch as slope, a roof slope. Lonergan's pitch is a converging of disciplinary slopes to a common dialectic, followed by a different genus of slopes descending from foundations to 10,000 villages. See *Cantower 8*: "Slopes: An Encounter" (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/cantower8.pdf>), where I weave the topic into a story from Joyce's *Dubliners*. A reader may well ask what exactly I am doing in this short essay. I would claim, briefly and broadly, that the text is journalism, a heave out from the eighth functional specialty, an appeal to those interested in Lonergan. My notes, on the other hand, belong in functional research, a heave-ho of stuff worth cycling and re-cycling.

⁶ The central footnote makes the central point regarding these groups, regarding the young people involved in the world of song and dance, regarding the madness of Wall Street etc., etc. The starting question is: "Who are running the globe in its broad shifts and in its detailed twists?" The expanding question is: Can we move, in these next 7 millennia, to a structure in which greed and stupidity as the norms are replaced by a covenant that integrates the promise that is the original meaning of money, a Jeremiah (31: 31-33) heart-throb and amygdalic tone? So, one is surely driven to some fantasy, say, about the state of the globe in 9011 A.D., some envisaging of an *Arrival in Cosmopolis* (the title of a paper on the topic available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/archive8.pdf>). Will that arrival be Pitch Perfect? No. There are to be "cumulative and progressive results" (*Method in Theology*, 4-5) in global care and its pilgrim embrace. And, in deep mystery, Perfect Pitch is to be an everlasting eschatological goal. As Thomas notes, the human minding of Jesus finds the melody of divinity everlastingly elusive, and our weave into The Seamless Symphonic Christ (see my *The Road to Religious Reality*, 19-20) is to be a wondrous everlasting tuning into "The music of the spheres" (Shakespeare, *Pericles*, V. i. 225-30: see my *Lack in the Beingstalk* (Axial Publishing, 2007), the conclusion of chapter 2).

I have had little response to my recent appeal for making F[#], FS, a topic.⁷ I reached out, in a flow of e-mails, to what I might call the Lonergan Leadership, but they remain, I presume, in disdain, ready to run next year's conferences in the

⁷ General discussion would be a start but my hope, of course, is to get the collaboration going. I follow up my appeal here and elsewhere with suggestions on various websites. There is the Q/A structure set up at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/qa-01.html>. There is the beginning of discussion on the *Lonerganforum* set up by Fr. Bob Doran of Marquette University, available at: <http://www.lonerganforum.com/index.php?board=3.0>. It is useful to quote here a contribution of mine on it this past week, since there may be those reading now who already wish to get beyond discussion to some starting effort. So here you have such possible ways of beginning: "Certainly we could debate on about the nature of functional specialization but it seems that the nature would be best revealed by simple experiments with some of Lonergan's suggestions. I wish to point out three, three that moreover suit different types of people or different stages of enculturation in Lonergan studies.

[1] One can have a shot at functional research. This is, oddly, easier than one might expect. It is a matter of working towards an attitude of "this is worth researching or recycling". So, you are interested in, say, some point in Lonergan or Darwin or Gadamer or Rahner. Then you pin down the point as best you can within your present horizon. Think of Boyer talking to Lonergan about the problem in a piece of Thomas (*CWL* 1, xviii). Try to get a decent grip on the problem and then check around with colleagues: has it been done before, is my viewpoint up to tackling it? The stance here is one of a normal successful science (see *Method*, 3-5). It is a way of showing "a fundamental concern for method, eliminating totalitarian ambitions" (Second Collection, the interview from Florida 1970, edited by McShane, 213).

[2] a second way of moving into functional collaboration is to place yourself (privately for starters!) at line 20 of *Method* 250: "each investigator proceeds to distinguish....etc." But here I would note that it is not a matter of naming Lonergan's achievements. It is a matter of discerning one's own, like Liddy did in his little book on "startling strangeness." Try for a life-narrative ... how many years, for instance, have you spent struggling into theory in some science. This can only be a stumbling business until you chat with others. That chatting gives an informal way of getting a glimpse of the "final objectification" (250: line 28). When functional collaboration matures, these narratives and positionings will be complex e.g. efforts to say just how one handles the search for "things" in some particular science, or how one meshes in prayer with Grace "to embrace the universe in a single view" (*Insight*, 442: see McShane, *Posthumous* 4, "Conversing with Divine Friends").

[3] the third way is less strenuous in that it offers a spectrum of efforts to communicate Lonergan's economics. One is balanced between FS 8 and ordinary journalism: one may have a decent grip on "the need for two types of firm" or just a suspicion that the present stuff is a disaster. This third way shows how difficult FS8 is, or, if you like, how difficult it is to add implementation to the present truncated metaphysics. A successful group effort here could change the globe and history in these next decades." ("Cosmopolis and Functional Specialization," Reply #11, September 28, 2012,

<http://www.lonerganforum.com/index.php?topic=40.msg131#msg131>)

same old same mold, to teach the same old comparative descriptive stuff that jives with the low notes of dead or shallow-breathing Caucasians, etc.: not at all “breathless”⁸ but quite datedly late, “big frogs in little ponds.”⁹ Well, to pitch another second-rate film at them, there is the president’s call of *Independence Day* that I share with “some few”¹⁰: “We will not go quietly into the night.”¹¹

⁸ The reference here is to the end of the first full paragraph on *Insight* CWL 4, 755 in which Lonergan is quite blunt about the embarrassing efforts to keep up with modern discoveries, “left in the unenviable position of always arriving on the scene a little breathless and a little late.” Here I am pushing toward a more discomfiting embarrassment. I am weaving together a doctrine about the failure of Lonergan students in regard to Lonergan’s entire effort. “Doctrines that are embarrassing will not be mentioned in polite company,” (*Method in Theology*, 299). My claim is brutally embarrassing and what I have begun these months and in these *Posthumous* essays can hardly be regarded as polite. But where is it going? We’ll leave that to the final note which points to Posthumous 7, “Lonergan’s 1833 Overture”.

⁹ This was an after-dinner remark of Lonergan in Dublin, Easter 1961, about the state of Catholic theology.

¹⁰ The “some few” is a reference to the end words of “Dimensions of Meaning” in *Collection*, CWL 4, 245. Might we make the few a majority in this next decade?

¹¹ In note 7 I added three suggestions from a *Lonerganforum* contribution regarding trying to get functional collaboration moving. Here I return to the second way with a comment that helps complete my remarks in note 8 above about the character of this essay. Yes, it is journalism, with pointings in the notes, functional-research wise, to matters to be cycled and recycled. But the main journalistic objective is aligned with “the method of metaphysics ... headed to an end that is unknown and as yet cannot be disclosed: from the viewpoint of the pupil, it proceeds by cajoling or **forcing** attention.” (*Insight*, 423) An unknown end? That, in this case, may be read as an arrogant claim of mine, quite offensive to my colleagues who have been reading *Method in Theology* for decades. But I take my stand here: the X of Cosmopolis is transferred to an X named functional collaboration. The central mistake of the past forty years is the assumption of the school that they knew what he was talking about. So, back we go to suggestion 2 of the 3 in note 7. This essay is part of the long story of my positioning. Lines 18-33 of *Method in Theology* require that those with a conflicting view of progress articulate that view with their own story, a narrative positioning regarding their sweaty climb to refinements of “the understanding to be reached to be at the level of one’s times” (*Method in Theology*, 350).