

## GENETIC PROCESS

“As genetic process, it develops generic potentiality to its specific perfection.”<sup>1</sup> This is the fourth time you have read this since its being quoted at the conclusion of [Vignette 11](#). Lonergan is writing of good will. Is he writing ontically or phyletically? In either case what is on his evolutionary sport-mind-reach and preach, some heuristic informedness, is what has become something of a slogan in my recent appeal: that there needs “to be a resolute and effective intervention in this historical process.”<sup>2</sup> Might our *Assembly* in this little essay be a wrapped together—topics and selves—asking about Archimedes at the beginning of chapter one of *Insight*<sup>3</sup> and asking about the *Eureka* of the contemporary answer to Lonergan’s Epilogue asking: “It may be asked in what department of theology the historical aspect of development might be treated.”<sup>4</sup> Both questions lift Lonergan, life-lifted Lonergan, into puzzling about and yearning for a realization of “the mystical body of Christ.”<sup>5</sup> “**the mystical body of Christ**: important in Lonergan’s early thinking (1933–38: ...)”<sup>6</sup>

Might the questions also lift you back to my odd first note in the previous Vignette? Well, with my nudge you reach back and have now in the *Assembly* line both Heraclitus and *Hebrews*.

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<sup>1</sup> *Insight*, 722, lines 35–36. Note 4 gives a nudge towards serious thinking about the genetic dynamics. See note 15 of [Vignette 24](#) on the centrality of the topic in *Insight*.

<sup>2</sup> *Phenomenology and Logic*, CWL 18, 306.

<sup>3</sup> *Insight*, 27.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 763, lines 29–30. My answers to the question emerged slowly in the past decade. There is the broad answer given in my book, *The Road to Religious Reality*, (Axial Publishing, 2012), where it is identified as the centerpiece, the standard of ongoing *Comparison (Method in Theology, 250)* in dialectic shifts of the cycle of collaboration. The treatise on the mystical body is to be a genetic sequence of theses—or, more fully a geohistorical sequencing—with a front-line member guiding present cycling. Then there is the place of such a treatise, principally its front-line, that would replace first-year theology’s present trivia on the Church. Of course, the restructuring of theological education in the next century is a shocking challenge of lifting common sense out of a complacent rut: “Red Indians, armed with bows and arrows, facing European muskets” (CWL 17, 366).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, line 31.

<sup>6</sup> I am quoting, from *Insight* 807, the editorial note g referred to in the previous text.

Where is this all going? It is going down and around page 250 of *Method*. I pass over, for the moment, the various occurrences of the word *comparison* (lines 5, 15, 30), on the way, to ask participants—like yourself, but I am thinking sadly of the reluctant elders—to weave into Lonergan’s three objectifications of lines 20, 24, 28, a making important, in their thinking and its objectifications, the mystical body of Christ.

Obviously, I am asking you, perhaps quite amateur in this dialectic enterprise, to do this in a serious “lighthouse” fashion. This is true even if your perspective is agnostic or even atheist: but we can get to that in later Vignettes. Further, I am not asking you to try, crazily, to think in terms of my strange far-out heuristic  $\{\mathbf{M}(\mathbf{W}_3)^{\mathbf{0}\Phi\mathbf{T}}\}$ <sup>4</sup>. Assemble your own package—it is the first objectification—and then throw in the above pointers as best you can. I am, at this stage, merely looking for a happening. I think back—and indeed, from my first reading of the piece in 1957 till now, finding it a twinkling piece of Lonergan’s flow—to the chap coming home to his burnt house and leaping to the “extremely restrained” statement, “Something happened.”

The something I wish to happen is that, by taking **Interior Lighthouse** time, you may see and be seized by the difficulty of grasping effectively the challenge—be it ontic or phyletic—of the sentence from Lonergan that began this little essay. “The answer is easily reached”<sup>7</sup> could well be Lonergan’s end-of-*Insight* answer as it was the end-of-chapter-5 answer. At the end of *Insight* he has the word *collaboration* occurring over 30 times in ten pages.<sup>8</sup> But, are you seized by his easy answer? Are you seized effectively, into an effective bent, by his answer? He needed to answer the problem of “chance influence”<sup>9</sup> in the genetics of humanity. He needed to bring others to see and be seized by his 29-year-old rejection of those singing “ahoy” on the global navy of corruption and to follow him through to an answer that would bring the good will of Jesus into more than “chance influence,” indeed to bring that influence slowly and patiently into an asymptote of pure genetics: a hope to be realized in the late positive Anthropocene Age.

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<sup>7</sup> *Insight*, 195: the beginning of the last paragraph of chapter 5, on “Space and Time.”

<sup>8</sup> *Insight*, 740–49.

<sup>9</sup> *Phenomenology and Logic*, CWL 18, 306.

Loneragan was eloquent about our present axial darkness. “History has been influenced enormously by individuals, but by and large the influence seems to have been a chance influence.”<sup>10</sup>

If those that live within a narrow horizon are all ‘ahoy’ for changing the historical process while those whose horizon is coincident with the field retire into an ivory tower and exert no influence upon society at large, then we are in the situation where the people who can do the most harm are doing it and the people who could do the most good are not.<sup>11</sup>

And what if—it is largely the present global state—the people committed to Jesus or Whomever are uninterested in the field, are indeed quite settled in the “ahoys” of politics and economics and educations and entertainments and advertizings? Then there can be no effective collaborative search for a “genetic process, (that) develops generic potentiality to its specific perfection.”<sup>12</sup> People with a bent towards ultimacy are bent away—“effete,”<sup>13</sup> even if prayerfully so, or just commonsense victims<sup>14</sup>—from the symphony of history, delaying the emergence of a dominance of the music of the spheres, the proper melodies and chordings yearning in cosmic molecules for those future millennia.

Does this disturb your horizon-poise, perhaps even send your good will hunting? “Doctrines that are embarrassing will not be mentioned in polite company.”<sup>15</sup>

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

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 306–7.

<sup>12</sup> *Insight*, 195.

<sup>13</sup> *Method in Theology*, 99, line 10.

<sup>14</sup> The ‘ahoy’ comment of Lonergan brings to mind a taxi-chat I had with him in Dublin, 1961, about the state of the Church. His humorous but brutal remark was: “it’s the bark of Peter: the pope is the captain, the clergy are the crew, and the laity are in the hold.” We may think this out more concretely later, e.g., in relation to teaching and preaching. But the “hold” is worth a pause: the manner in which the ordinary people are held and settled in social networks of abuse and decay, not encouraged by clergy or intellectuals to think beyond some slim religiosity and morality within that “life unlivable” (*Topics in Education*, *CWL* 10, 232). See [Vignette 19](#), “The Cargo Pants.”

<sup>15</sup> *Method in Theology*, 299.