

A PARADIGMATIC PANEL DYNAMIC FOR (ADVANCED) STUDENTS (OF RELIGION)¹

Philip McShane
Professor Emeritus
Mt. St. Vincent University

It is best to place first here my original appeal for three participants in a specific four-person panel at the Loyola Marymount University Lonergan meeting of April 19–21, 2018. As the group moved towards refining the presentation, the challenge brought to the panel members and to the audience revealed itself as globally paradigmatic in a sense that will emerge in this essay. The issue, after all, is not just the rescuing of *Method in Theology*'s full meaning, but the larger project neatly expressed in the title of a book published at the same time as *Method in Theology*: Whitson's *The Coming Convergence of World Religions*.² My suggestion, therefore, may be taken up as a project by any religious group, indeed by any group, and followed through at whatever level the group is working on.³ First, I give you my letter, sent initially to three experts in Lonergan's theology, only one of whom was available. I continued my outreach until we arrived at the panel for the conference.⁴ The initial *Invitation* might be read as addressed to you at some level. In the second section I give a context for musing on those levels and your level, alone and in some group. In the final section I turn to "Certain Problems of Beginning."⁵

1. THE INVITATION

Dear X, Y, and Z,

My suggestion below, regarding a panel at the April LA meeting of 2018—will certainly be a surprise, but, as I head towards 86, I feel that I should stir the waters of Lonergan Studies with regard to what for me seems a present shrinkage of the project of *Method in Theology*.

I have been pondering, these last years, Lonergan's view of progress when he was 29:

What is progress? It is a matter of intellect. Intellect is understanding of sensible data. It is the guiding form, statistically effective, of human action transforming the sensible data of life. Finally, it is a fresh intellectual synthesis understanding the new situation created by the old intellectual form and providing **a statistically effective form for the new cycle**

¹ My original title was "A Panel Dynamic for Students of Lonergan's *Method in Theology*," and that title remains central and valid. The shift is a topic in this essay's discussion.

² Robley Edward Whitson, *The Coming Convergence of World Religions* (Bristol: The United Institute, 1992). This book was first published in 1971 (New York: Newman Press).

³ The panel format is a helpful transitional style. In a decent maturity of the task of *Method in Theology*, 250, each member of the panel would have to move through lines 18–33 of the page, "at pains not to conceal his tracks but to lay all his cards on the table" (Ibid., 193). See the following note.

⁴ Note that I was self-selected and that this essay is a partial laying of my cards on the table. So, my references are primarily to my own efforts over more than sixty years to position myself in the story.

⁵ I am recalling Eric Voegelin's last volume here. See below, at note 55.

of human action that will bring forth in reality the incompleteness of the later act of intellect by setting it new problems.

I am quoting here from the “Essay in Fundamental Sociology” (in Mike Shute’s volume *Lonergan’s Early Economic Research* at page 20). Twelve pages later he nudges our present trapped imagination shockingly—raising a massive issue of intellect’s “resolute and effective intervention in this historical process” (*Phenomenology and Logic*, 306)—when he writes of “a triple reason for the liquidation of the present order of sovereign states.” It was thirty-one years later that he hit elementarily on the structure of “a statistically effective form for the new cycle of human action” and sketched it slimly in 1969. What a climb towards visioning an effective creative control of the ecology of world tribes, banks, arts, crafts, whatever! It seems to me now that the new full global situation becomes, normatively, a hierarchic mediation of eight layers of topologically-sophisticated situation rooms hovering effectively over every village, every human desire, depravity, longing and loneliness, moving in millennia from Poisson to Bell-Curve effectiveness. “Is this to be taken literally or is it figure? It would be fair and fine, indeed, to think it no figure.” (Lonergan thus ends the 1934 “Essay on Fundamental Sociology.”)

I mentioned Lonergan “slimly” sketching, and I think also now of his sharing with me in the summer of 1966, pacing about in his little room, his frustration about doing a non-slim book, summed up in his edgy words “I can’t put all of *Insight* into the first chapter!” There is a sense in which he both failed and succeeded. The failure is evident in what has become of the book and its influence in the past half-century. The eventual success, I would claim, lurks in certain pointing and pointed sections of the book, four of which I select for panel discussion at the LA April 19–21, 2018 meeting:

Panel Project

Method in Theology, selected sections for a panel of four:

- [1] the first three paragraphs of chapter 1 (3–4);
- [2] page 250, lines 18–33;
- [3] page 287, lines 18–23;
- [4] page 358, lines 9–27.

I would ask each of you whether you might be available to participate in that panel. There are four slots: if you are interested you could simply say “yes” or you could focus your interest on one slot, or even prioritize that interest, e.g., [4] [1] [3] [2]. Then I would send back, for your consideration, a suggested best meeting of the demands. I am happy to settle for myself occupying whatever slot is of least interest.

I know that this is an unexpected invitation, even a discomfortingly blunt challenge, but, to quote good old Fred Crowe, “is there not room for a measure of bluntness at this stage?” (“The Exigent Mind,” *Spirit as Inquiry: Studies in Honor of Bernard Lonergan S.J.*, Herder and Herder, 1964, 27.)

Blessings and thanks,
Phil

2. THE BROADEST CHALLENGE

I turn to the consideration of the panel as paradigmatic, and globally so. This global reach can be seen simply through leaping from the four selected texts of Lonergan's book to the issues that those texts raise. Recalling the first of my footnotes, you may flex your imagination about the range of the paradigm: indeed, reach thus through illustrations, done alone or in groups, of the fact that the issues belong in any zone of human inquiry. Let us, then, lift the four texts and their numbers into this fuller context:⁶

- (1) Where are we in the story of our venture?
- (2) What are our strategies of answering that or any question regarding our story?
- (3) What is the place of serious understanding in our story?
- (4) How effective is our story-making?

(1) *Where are we in the story of our venture?*

This question is best considered in a concrete context. I myself am thinking, and have been for some time, about the "we" that is the considerable subgroup of Sikhs who live in Vancouver.⁷ A realistic view of the question for them is that it simply is not present in any seriousness.⁸ You might read the first paragraph of *Method in Theology* and find resonances to their poise.⁹ "What counts is the example of the master," and the founding master, Guru Nanak, is a presence.¹⁰ Such is the way of many groups, including the Christian group. But note now, in a fresh searching poise, the final sentence of the paragraph, "Such, also, will always remain the one way in which the refinements and subtleties proper to specialized areas will be communicated."

Carry that fresh poise into the second paragraph. "There are, however, bolder spirits." Is N. T. Wright one of them? That great scholar—whom I have read, listened to, and admired for at least a

⁶ It is helpful to pause over an early illustration of this story-making puzzling. It is found in the first chapter of my little book, *Futurology Express* (Vancouver: Axial Publishing, 2013) which is, in fact a reduction of *Method in Theology* to general categories. It deals with the story of a family with the problem of going on annual holidays. For a sublation of *Method in Theology* into Christianity's special categories, see my *The Allure of the Compelling Genius of History* (Vancouver: Axial Publishing, 2016).

⁷ Greater Vancouver has one of the two largest Sikh populations in the world—100,000—that are not in India.

⁸ I have to hand a magnificent little book, *Sikhism: A Guide for the Perplexed*, by Arvind-Pal Mandair (Bloomsbury, 2013 pb). Its fifth chapter, "Sikh Philosophy" (pp. 131–155) is a powerful piece of guiding into that world. However, it is not the present world of my local Sikh community. Will it ever be? This is a question lurking in my present work and in this short paradigmatic program. My present work is represented by a series of essays in *Divyadaan: Journal of Education and Philosophy*, beginning the three – there are three volumes per year of *Divyadaan* 28 (2017) and continuing into 2020. Some of these essays will be referenced below. The tradition of Sikhism in its local Canadian form—we have now, Jagmeet Singh, as Sikh leader of the federal New Democratic Party—will be a concern in "Converging Religions," an article of 2019. *Converging* is to be read as active, "fruit to be borne" (*Method in Theology*, 355). I am trying to meet my own demand, expressed at the end of the Preface of *The Allure of the Compelling Genius of History*, for a treatment of the dynamics of active global convergence.

⁹ I conclude this essay by quoting the first three paragraphs of *Method in Theology*. I use there a special typeface to highlight it, as I do for the other pieces of the text from the book that are quoted within my essay.

¹⁰ Guru Nanak (1469–1539) creatively merged elements of Hinduism and Muslimism and is regarded as one of the great of religious innovators. He was born to a simple Hindu family and his father Mehta Kalian Das was an accountant in the employment of the local Muslim authorities. Guru Nanak's writings, in the form of 974 hymns, are incorporated into *Guru Granth Sahib*, the Sikh scriptures.

decade—I would shockingly claim, is not.¹¹ But it is only the shock value of the claim that is of interest here in this section, for, grasping the claim requires a decent climb through the topics of (2), (3), and (4). So, best think of the Vancouver Sikhs or some group familiar to you, indeed, to which you perhaps belong: think of the group and their scriptures, regulations, constitutions,¹² whatever, and of their leadership quite evidently not focused on “the successful science of their times;” nor do “they study its procedures.”

A pause over poise is most likely necessary here. What fresh poise did you carry into the second paragraph? Is my second paragraph under (1) not a little strange, awakening perhaps—might it be so, OM—suspicions about the fresh poise carried, suspicions about “all that is lacking,”¹³ about just how much you have in your “paws,”¹⁴ your poise?

Perhaps your suspicion can be deepened a little by reading now with an edgy freshness those other two paragraphs that fill the first page of *Method in Theology*.¹⁵ There is, for one thing, the edgy freshness of my bringing in two great men, Guru Nanak and Tom Wright. Might I bring in a further edginess by mentioning the reading power of the great twentieth century woman, Nadia Boulanger? Aaron Copeland remarked of her, “Nadia Boulanger knew everything there was to know about music; she knew the oldest and the latest music, pre-Bach and post-Stravinsky, and she knew it cold.”¹⁶ Think, fantasize, about a woman, another Nadia, that parallels in theology her competence in reading those beginning notes of Stravinsky’s *The Firebird*,¹⁷ a woman who could read “the music of the spheres”¹⁸ in the first three paragraphs of *Method in Theology*.

Crazier still, think now of merging the two women to find that a new Nadia is baffled, in the world of *Method in Music*, by the turn of page 3 to the four-clash, fore-clash, fang-ough, of symbols, Clear Lee En Ough. In her greatness the new Nadia might well say, “Indeed, ‘there is a lack of masters to be followed and of models to be imitated.’”¹⁹ Where is our Stravinsky going with these odd first sounds? There is the story that Nijinsky, the Nadia of dance, stood baffled in the Parisian wings of June 1913, counting beats. Then there is the other relevant story of Stravinsky at lunch

¹¹ I have written abundantly on the problem of N.T. Wright’s work. See, for example, *Disputing Quests* 4, 5, and 8: “Scripture Studies: Turn Wright (I, II, and III),” accessed December 1, 2017, <http://www.philipmcshane.org/disputing-quests>.

¹² I have, in recent years, raised the very existential question, which I proposed as a Constitutional Amendment in *Profit: The Stupid View of President Donald Trump*, (Vancouver: Axial Publishing, 2016): “Do you view humanity as possibly maturing—in some serious way—or just messing along between good and evil, whatever you think they are?” (85)

¹³ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, vol. 3 of the Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 559, line 24.

¹⁴ “He’s got the whole thing in his intellectual paws, so to speak.” *Phenomenology and Logic: The Boston College Lectures on Mathematical Logic and Existentialism*, vol. 18 of the Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, ed. Philip J. McShane (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2001), 357.

¹⁵ Available below: see note 9 above.

¹⁶ Alan Kendall, *The Tender Tyrant, Nadia Boulanger: A Life Devoted to Music*, with an Introduction by Yehudi Menuhin (London: MacDonald and James, 1976), 14.

¹⁷ “Stravinsky told me himself!” See page 2 of *Cantower* 1, “Function and History” (assessed December 1, 2017, <http://www.philipmcshane.org/cantowers>), where I recall Bobby Tucker and Quincy Jones memories of a master class with Boulanger: Quincy Jones, *Q. The Autobiography of Quincy Jones* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 123. Tucker wrote that particular chapter.

¹⁸ Shakespeare, *Pericles*, V. iii. Line 228.

¹⁹ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Dartmon, Longman, and Todd, 1972), 4.

with a distinguished violinist, sketching the notes of a sequence. The violinist remarked, “I could not play that.” Stravinsky’s reply: “I did not write it for you.”

For whom did Lonergan write these three paragraphs? I think of two other women who nudge us along. There is Georg Eliot:

If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel’s heartbeat, and we should die of that roar which is on the other side of silence. As it is, the quickest of us walk about well wadded with stupidity.²⁰

The grass and the squirrel’s heart sing along in the music of the universe’s “dynamic joy and zeal.”²¹ Might Eliot help us to turn, in the book *Method in Theology*, from page three’s “academic disciplines” to page four’s “clearly enough,” so that eventually “good will wills the order of the universe, and so it wills with that orders dynamic joy and zeal”?²² Then there is that other lady of China. “This is plenty werry new, heya? Ayee yah, our gods are five, ten thousand years old. Your Lord Jesus was na Chinese, heya?”²³ But we are not now focused on the God Jesus but on the plod that would ease us to “rule over all ‘below heaven,’ *tien-hsia*.” Yes, as Voegelin points out, “Above the *min* and the *jen* there rises the King, distinguished as the *i jen*, the One Man. . . . The king ruled over all ‘below Heaven,’ *tien-hsia*.”²⁴ But the rule is spirit-given, swiven into sow what: “when the Spirit of truth comes, he will lead you to the complete truth.”²⁵

So we—you and I—and the Sikhs, at our impossible best, may reach, with all other whatter-bestests, for a glimpse of a fullness and completeness of an Upanishadic truth, “obtained by sitting (*sat*) devotedly (*ni*) near (*upa*)”:²⁶ but near what? Yes, near what. Yes, near the story of what.

The emergence of humanity is the evolutionary achievement of sowing what among the cosmic molecules. The sown what infests the clustered molecular patterns behind and above your eyes, between your ears, lifting areas—named by humans like Brocca and Wernicke—towards patterned noise-making that in English is marked by “so what?”²⁷

²⁰ George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977), 135.

²¹ The final words of *Insight*, 722.

²² The full page *Insight*, 722—a call for repentance by Lonergan—is the focus of attention in my “*Insight and the Interior Lighthouse: 2020–2050, Divyadaan: Journal of Philosophy & Education* 28, no. 2 (2017): 277–300, where I compare reading the page to reading the same page 722 in George Joos, *Theoretical Physics* (London: Blackie and Son, 1951). The comparison is relevant to the point being made in note 51 below.

²³ I borrow here from the lead-in quotation of my “Middle Kingdom, Middle Man: *T’ien-hsia i jen*” in *Searching for Cultural Foundations* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1984, 1–43) which is from *Tai-Pan*, a novel by James Clavell (New York: Atheneum, 1966), 194. The article presents my sublation of the views on the Axial Period of Jaspers, Toynbee and Voegelin. I had not, of course, grasped it then as the transition from the negative to the positive Anthropocene, a division of the Anthropocene Age that I invented only in recent years. I would note the meaning of *jen* as fulsomely social, a point made by Whitson regularly in dealing with its meaning for Confucius. See *The Coming Convergence of World Religions*, pages 63, 67, 68, 71.

²⁴ I quote here, as I did in note 1 of the article referenced in the previous note, from Eric Voegelin’s *The Ecumenic Age*, vol. 4 of *Order and History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), 289.

²⁵ *The Gospel of John*, 16:13.

²⁶ Richard V. de Smet, “Guidelines in Indian Philosophy,” *Divyadaan: Journal of Philosophy and Education* 21, no. 2 (2010): 257.

²⁷ The first paragraph of chapter one, “Sow What?” in *The Allure of the Compelling Genius of History* (Axial Publishing, 2015), 3.

Thus, we return to our question and bestest quest: “Where are we in the story of our venture?”

Were we to ask Guru Lonergan, what would he say? Would he answer, as he did my questioning in the summer of 1966, with a comment on the ease of the haul of it all, the “clearly enough”? Might he cut down his three first paragraphs of *Method* “in a spare and lapidary style that makes every word count,”²⁸ a compacting habit of his elderhood? Might he say: “It’s clear enough if you grasp the two times of the temporal subject in history and the inevitable ‘Axial Period’ between them”?²⁹ Is the axial time predominantly a longer cycle of decline in which oddities like Mo Ti and Socrates and Jesus seed a larger what-seeding? I recall, in the 1970s sailing into Piraeus after a night on the Mediterranean of musing over minding and leaping to the odd conclusion that there was no “Greek Discovery of Mind.”³⁰ A few strange Greeks discovered mind. We have no more discovered mind as Lonergan minded it than we discover Newton’s laws of Motion by visiting his grave.

Is this altogether too extreme a view about our grip on our story? And how are you and I or the Sikhs to get an effective focused view? “What are our strategies of answering that or any question regarding our story?” So, we arrive at the second of the listed panel questions.

(2) *What are our strategies of answering that or any question regarding our story?*

I am talking here about gatherings, conventions, councils, parliaments, but in distant fantasy. I might say I am talking about effectively shared horizons of a distant future, the mature positive Anthropocene, when those horizons will glimpse and self-glimpse in luminous darkness³¹ the distant field of being.

The field is *the* universe, but my horizon defines *my* universe.

Both are relevant to metaphysics, for metaphysics deals with *ens*, with *omnia*, with the universe.

The field regards metaphysics as such, but the horizon regards metaphysics as possible-to-me, relevant-to-me.³²

I am about to launch us saskwhats into the eye of the storm, into what’s effort to read itself in and into a companionship of mysterious selves: surely this Lonergan wind will shake your read?

²⁸ I quote Charles Hefling Jr.’s comment on the later Lonergan’s economic writing in the “Editors’ Preface” of *Macroeconomic Dynamics: An Essay in Circulation Analysis*, vol. 15 of the Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, edited by Frederick Lawrence, Patrick Byrne, and Charles Hefling, Jr. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), xix.

²⁹ So now you have it! Paragraph 1: the first time of the temporal subject; paragraph 2, the axial period; paragraph 3, the seeding of the second time of the temporal subject. See Bernard Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, vol. 12 of the Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, trans. Michael G. Shields and ed. Robert M. Doran and Daniel Monsour (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 401. The trouble is the “you” who genuinely has it needs to be in that second time of the human story.

³⁰ *Method in Theology*, 90–96. It seems worthwhile to draw your attention to a piece of text—in italics here—missed in the manuscript: “limitations recede in the measure that linguistic *feed-back is achieved, that is in the measure that explanations and statements provide the sensible presentations ...*” (line 12 of page 92).

³¹ I am recalling here my 1998 essay, “Towards a Luminous Darkness of Circumstances: *Insight* after forth years” (accessed December 1, 2017, <http://www.philipmcschane.org/website-articles>) which begins with Ortega y Gasset’s musing about Cervantes still waiting for someone to understand him.

³² *Phenomenology and Logic*, 199. The quotation is from Lonergan’s prepared notes, so the italics and hyphens are, not the editor’s, but his.

Should I now reverently and relevantly-for-me type in the four movements of this Lonergan 1833 Overture?

Horizons.

The results, accordingly, will not be uniform. But the source of this lack of uniformity will be brought out into the open when each investigator proceeds to distinguish between positions, which are compatible with intellectual, moral and religious conversion and, on the other hand, counterpositions, which are incompatible either with intellectual, or with moral, or with religious conversion.

A further objectification of horizons is obtained when each investigator operates on the materials by indicating the view that would result from developing what he regarded as positions and be reversing what he has regarded as counterpositions.

There is a final objectification of horizon when the results of the foregoing process are themselves regarded as material, when they are assembled, completed, compared, reduced, classified, selected, when positions and counterpositions are distinguished, when positions are developed and counterpositions reversed.³³

I pause for a day here: what might I add to this shocking, brilliant, innovative, invitation? What might you add, you both in solitary ontic self-searching and in some community of phyletic aspiration, “a process of self-constitution occurring within worldwide society”?³⁴ My reach is both to the distant heights of dialectic confrontation that is to mediate “cumulative and progressive results”³⁵ and to various struggling muddled present gatherings willing to scratch their way out of today’s grave discourse.³⁶ And because of this spread of situations envisaged in my pause and my paws, I see that brevity or silence is now appropriate on the issue and the issuing of the subtle details of this self-plumbing challenge pitched at us in these 16 central lines of Lonergan’s book.

What is at issue? What is at issue. The issue, your issuing, is getting some sense, what-show, what’s-how, of the slow climb to the effective control of scientific meaning. So we come to the third panel-question in our list.

(3) *What is the place of serious understanding in our story?*

The challenging quotation for the third panel member, and for you and me now, surrounds Lonergan’s crazy “clear-enough”³⁷ claim that “one can go on.”

³³ *Method in Theology*, 250. I would note that I have considered this piece of text in a number of contexts. For example, there is the context of chapter 12, “Dialectic and the Notion of Being” in *The Allure of the Compelling Genius of History*, where the text is reproduced on pages 145–46. My most recent, more comprehensive treatment of the meaning of the text is “The Coming Convergence of World Responsiveness,” *Divyadaan: Journal of Philosophy and Education* 29 (2018).

³⁴ *Method in Theology*, 363.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 4 and 5.

³⁶ Recall the end of the paragraph at note 30, above, about Newton’s grave.

³⁷ Those discomfiting words on the top of page 4 of *Method*. I am reminded of equally discomfiting words that regularly occur in Lonergan’s Latin works at the beginning of paragraphs, words like “These things having been well understood.” Perhaps the nudge of a particular one would help us in our search for perspective. Lonergan writes of Aquinas: might we read it of Lonergan? “When one has grasped all of this, one can only admire the terse and simple elegance of St. Thomas” *The Triune God: Systematics*, 361.

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 dialectic development.³⁸

How am I, or the panelist, to handle this, the most difficult of the panel topics? Should I appeal to you to seriously read *Method in Theology* page 260's appeal to ingest *Insight*? There the claim is that "one can go on" to ingest a common sense of good, etc. only if one has ingested "the precision"³⁹ of natural science, and in particular crossed comprehendingly "the natural bridge over which we may advance from our examination of science to an examination of common sense."⁴⁰ The brilliant thing that I call now *rich commonsense modern scholarship* has no tolerance of or openness to that poise. Regular mention neatly replaces comprehension. General bias is the sickening shite-smell "that hangs like a pall over every brilliant thing."⁴¹ But is your nose and knows tuned to its presence in your nose and knows? I think not, learned folk of Lonergan studies. So, you take your stand with the masses against the "clear enough" stand of Lonergan in the brutal appeal for explanatory work of the paragraph that weaves your too-casual reading from page 609 to 610 of *Insight*. So, the pretend-followers of Lonergan, who casually read the first lines of that earlier page 604 in *Insight* 17.3.7 about *Counterpositions*, are not "bewildered or dismayed when they find"⁴² paragraph 60910. They are used to stuff being mentioned to them and repeated mention allows them to join an "effete"⁴³ mention club that clubs to death the need to story- and multi-story-ask "what is the X of Cosmopolis?" Perhaps I can cut off this shocking topic by recalling again a mention by Lonergan that ends with, yes, an equivalent question:

We have mentioned the fact that the greatest of evil in the world is the evil that is concretized in the historic flow, the capital of injustice that hangs like a pall over every brilliant thing, that makes men and nations groan over others' glory, that provokes anger and suicide and dire wars, that culminates in the dull mind and sluggish body of the enslaved people or the decayed culture.

The Christian counterpiece to this in the Christian victory over sin is charity. For charity becomes not angry over wrongs, charity does not nourish hatred or threaten war, charity does not despair; charity is an eternal fire of optimism and of energy, dismayed at naught, rebuked by none, tireless, determined, deliberate; with deepest thought and unbounded spontaneity charity ever strives, struggles, labours, exhorts, implores, prays for the betterment of the unity of action that is man, for the effective rule of sweetness and light, for a fuller manifestation of what charity loves, Wisdom Divine, the Word made Flesh.

³⁸ *Method in Theology*, 287, lines 19–23.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 260, line 19.

⁴⁰ *Insight*, 163: the first page of chapter 5, on "Space and Time".

⁴¹ "Essay in Fundamental Sociology," 43.

⁴² *Insight*, page 604, line 4.

⁴³ *Method in Theology*, 99. The context is a consideration of the varieties of undifferentiated consciousness in the later stages of meaning. In those stages, however, one should envisage a type of undifferentiated sensibility to functional effectiveness and an increasing tonality of mystery. See *Insight*, 569–572.

The Sovereign Pontiff has proclaimed the Kingship of Christ. Do you know His Kingdom?⁴⁴

Have we not weaved round to that fundamental issue,

(4) *How effective is our story-making?*

We certainly rise, in that previous quotation, to the heights of the problem of our story-making! Should we not continue the quotation to the end of Lonergan's 29-year-old "Essay in Fundamental Sociology" to find the heights of aspirations of effectiveness?

'In the last days the mountains of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills: and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say: Come, and let us go to the mountain of the Lord and to the house of the God of Jacob: and he will teach us his ways and we will walk in his paths. For the law shall come forth from Sion: and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge the Gentiles and rebuke many people: and they shall turn their swords into ploughshares and their spears into sickles. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation: neither shall they be exercised any more to war.' (Isaiah 2:2-4)

Is this to be taken literally or is it figure? It would be fair and fine, indeed, to think it no figure.

So ends that great incomplete essay.⁴⁵ Does it not make mention of the poise us in the full task of the final chapter of *Method in Theology*, where effectiveness is the agony of the question of Lonergan about "fruit to be borne"⁴⁶ and the quest of Jesus, "... may they all be one."⁴⁷ And does not quest stir us to take a positive stand on the need for Amendment A to any constitution of any group: "Do you view humanity as possibly maturing—in some serious way—or just messing along between good and evil, whatever you think they are?"⁴⁸ So, we come to our final panel text:

Now, however, our interest is not in dialectic as affecting theological opinions but in dialectic as affecting community, action, **situation**. It affects community for, just as common meaning is constitutive of community, so dialectic divides community into radically opposed groups. It affects action for, just as conversion leads to intelligent, reasonable, responsible action, so dialectic adds division, conflict, oppression. It affects the **situation**, for **situations** are the cumulative product of previous actions and, when previous actions have been guided by the light and darkness of dialectic, the resulting **situation** is not some intelligible whole but rather a set of misshapen, poorly proportioned and incoherent fragments. [on this topic see *Insight*, pp. 191-206, 218-232, 619-633, 687-730.]

⁴⁴ "Essay in Fundamental Sociology," 43.

⁴⁵ The essay was originally 130 pages. See M. Shute, *Lonergan's Early Economic Research* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 15-16.

⁴⁶ *Method in Theology*, 355: the first page of that final chapter.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 367: the final section of the chapter, the final quotation in the book from scripture.

⁴⁸ See note 12 above.

Finally, the divided community, their conflicting actions, and the messy **situation** are headed for disaster. For the messy **situation** is diagnosed differently by the divided community; action is ever more at cross-purposes; and the **situation** becomes still messier to provoke still sharper differences in diagnosis and policy, more radical criticism of one another's actions, and a deeper crisis in the **situation**.⁴⁹

That high ending “interest”⁵⁰ of the second section of chapter 14 of *Method in Theology* seems full of Lonergan's frustration. It was not, I would say, written in a clear memory of his shot at the shitshape of three decades earlier, “a fresh intellectual synthesis understanding the new **situation**,” but note that “situation” rolls from his typing fingers eight times in that ending. Might you not pause, with the panelist, over the weirdness of the new situation he left us in, with now, nownow, Now, the problem of weaving forward into the full topology of eight situation-rooms that is to be the mediating cultural matrix of the theology of the positive Anthropocene Age? The topology of the first four situation rooms is not at all as complex as the descent from the foundational room.⁵¹ “The descent is, not properly a deduction, but rather a succession of transpositions to ever more

⁴⁹ *Method in Theology*, 358. The square brackets above contain Lonergan's footnote to the text, with pagination given to the Collected Works version of *Insight*.

⁵⁰ Might I nudge you to pause, thus “cajoling or forcing attention” (*Insight*, 415), on your existential meaning—subject-as-subject—of “interest” as you read here. Might there rise in you a dread, an anxiety, about your “Mitwelt”? See *Phenomenology and Logic*, 288: these end chapters are the context of my question.

⁵¹ My *Cantower* 8, “Slopes: An Encounter” (accessed on December 1, 2017, <http://www.philipmcshane.org/cantowers>) gives a simple beginning image of slopes “up” on page 13. But we need to move towards the common heuristic represented by W_3 to crawl forward towards effective explanatory control. My article “Minding Reality,” *Divyadaan: Journal of Philosophy and Education* 29 (2018) gives further pointers. I had thought of adding a parallel between the growing scientific meaning of the word “situation” with the growing experimental and pragmatic meaning of “electricity” after Maxwell, but it began to look like another essay. Consider, for example, replacing “situation” by adequate symbolizations as Maxwell replaced “electricity” by

$$\left(\frac{\partial^2 E_x}{\partial x^2} + \frac{\partial^2 E_x}{\partial y^2} + \frac{\partial^2 E_x}{\partial z^2}\right) = \frac{1}{c_0^2} \left(\frac{\partial^2 E_x}{\partial t^2}\right)$$

$$\left(\frac{\partial^2 E_y}{\partial x^2} + \frac{\partial^2 E_y}{\partial y^2} + \frac{\partial^2 E_y}{\partial z^2}\right) = \frac{1}{c_0^2} \left(\frac{\partial^2 E_y}{\partial t^2}\right)$$

$$\left(\frac{\partial^2 E_z}{\partial x^2} + \frac{\partial^2 E_z}{\partial y^2} + \frac{\partial^2 E_z}{\partial z^2}\right) = \frac{1}{c_0^2} \left(\frac{\partial^2 E_z}{\partial t^2}\right)$$

determinate contexts.”⁵² “Only concrete instances can convey what is meant.”⁵³ We are millennia away from Bell-Curve “resolute and effective intervention in this historical process.”⁵⁴

3. “CERTAIN PROBLEMS OF BEGINNING”

My title is in quotation marks, and its source give us a relevant context: it is a piece of the first sentence of Eric Voegelin’s final volume *In Search of Order: Order and History*: “Where does the Beginning Begin? As I am putting down these words on an empty page I have begun to write a sentence that, when it is finished, will be the beginning of a chapter on certain problems of beginning.”⁵⁵

Do I see this essay, this panel, as a fresh beginning? I have sign-posted too many fresh beginnings to think of this as an effective fresh beginning.⁵⁶ Only in the past week have I returned, in a fresh beginning, to Fred Crowe’s work referenced above, and sense as never before a key flaw: his failure to lean into effectiveness as a dominant topic.⁵⁷ So, after sixty years, I begin to glimpse in outrageous freshness Lonergan’s “trivial”⁵⁸ pursuit. How, then, am I to expect this little

⁵² *Method in Theology*, 142. There is to be a complex cyclic dynamic in the “successions of transpositions” and the control of those transpositions requires a grip on some Markovian matrix-sphere that enlarges on the geohistorical view suggested in *The Allure of the Compelling Genius of History*, 125–6. A fuller enlargement is found in *Question 36*, “An Appeal to Fred Lawrence and Other Elders” (accessed December 1, 2017, <http://www.philipmcshane.org/questions-and-answers>). One thus has to get beyond vague talk of ongoing, overlapping, etc. contexts to precise international weaving flows through history.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 143, the beginning of note 1, with a twist of meaning. The geohistorical heuristic of the previous note is a relatively empty open heuristic. The problem of this piece of the *X* of Cosmopolis, functional collaboration, is compactly considered in chapter 10, “Metaphysical Equivalence and Functional Specialization” of *Method in Theology: Revisions and Implementations* (accessed December 1, 2017, <http://www.philipmcshane.org/website-books>). Add the context of *The Allure of the Compelling Genius of History*, 235.

⁵⁴ *Phenomenology and Logic*, 306.

⁵⁵ Eric Voegelin, *In Search of Order*, volume 5, *Order and History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 13.

⁵⁶ My first effort in this was “The Contemporary Thomism of Bernard Lonergan,” *Philosophical Studies* (Ireland) 11 (1962): 63–80 (available online at: <http://www.philipmcshane.org/published-articles>). It was the beginning of a futile call for serious explanatoriness in Lonergan studies. That seriousness, it seems to me now, will only emerge in the implementation of cyclic functionality, which should spin off general bias in a statistics moving from Poisson pessimism to Bell-curve effectiveness in coming millennia.

⁵⁷ Fred Crowe’s *The Theology of the Christian Word: A Study in History* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978) has engaged my attention for decades. I first wrote of it in *Cantower 38*, section 4, where I dug out the obvious deficiency, that it lacked the precision required of functional history. Later, in the essay series *Humus* (available online at: <http://www.philipmcshane.org/humus>), I began to see it as a nudge to precisions of research. At present my interest is in seeing in what way it weaves stumblingly towards the genetic sequence of theses on the mystical body that would give a ground meaning to *Comparison* (*Method in Theology*, 250) and solve the problem posed by Lonergan in *Insight 763–4* about the treatise on the mystical body. That topic is the focus of my attention in *The Road to Religious Reality* (Vancouver: Axial Publishing, 2012). See pages 19–23, 28, 33–4, 38.

⁵⁸ My article for the sixtieth anniversary volume on the publication of *Insight of Divyadaan: Journal of Philosophy and Education* 28, no.1 (2017), “Insight and the Trivialization of History,” deals with two extreme meanings of trivialization. There is the obvious one that recalls roads of Rome and then there is the Trinitarian meaning of Lonergan’s *The Triune God: Systematics* neatly caught in the kataphatic prayer-meaning of W_3 : “Double You Three in me and all, Claspings Cherishing Cauling Craving Christing”: the five “C”s emerge out of *The Triune God: Systematics*, 471–3.

“Commonquest Manifesto”⁵⁹—going “against all sorts of mortmain”⁶⁰—to seed, slowly slowly, the emergence of amoebic cells of searching glocally, in beginners, in the toxically wasted? Will its Overture Performance in Los Angeles in April 2018 jump-start a repentance from “academic disciplines”⁶¹ Lonergan studies? Might a more mature panel-channeling of Lonergan vibe through the halls of academic gatherings toxically devoted to his writings? And is “the present section”⁶² so effectively concerned about this as to rise, in evolutionary sporting sprite, to “look up at the skies! O, look at all the fire-folks sitting in the air”⁶³ There is the third of three channels, Lonergan’s fire-flight sitting in the air. “We are not there yet.”⁶⁴ “The spirit bloweth where it listeth, and all new ideas are ridiculous until the contrary is demonstrated by individual initiative, adapted by creative imagination, carried through by personal risk.”⁶⁵

Might you begin reading this manifesto again, and begin the move to the dreadful self-identification, ontic and phyletic, of our “vegetable bondage of the blood”⁶⁶ that locks us, in happy blindness, in the second of three channels, axial victims? Might you begin reading *Method in Theology* again, noticing in lightsome darkness that Lonergan writes in that third channel, “away alone”⁶⁷ evolutionary sport, writing into the axial darkness that possesses your molecules, that—to now, nownow, Now—left you oh so cosy in misreading the man and his “**Reverierun**”⁶⁸ book,

⁵⁹ I first used this designation in discussing moves towards an economics future in the essay, *Prehumous* 1, “Teaching High-school Economics: A Common-Quest Manifesto,” accessed December 1, 2017, <http://www.philipmcshane.org/prehumous>.

⁶⁰ I quote from the conclusion of Ezra Pound’s poem, “Commission”. The poem is substantially reproduced in my relevant introduction to the present task: *Music That Is Soundless* (1968¹) (Nova Scotia: Axial Publishing, 2005), 29. The task expanded into the ongoing recent series of articles titled, generally, *The Interior Lighthouse*. (See *HOW* 13, *Disputing Quests* 12, *Disputing Quests* 13, *Interpretation* 4, *Interpretation* 16, and *Interpretation* 17, accessed December 1, 2017, <http://www.philipmcshane.org/website-series>.) The deep issue is the global shift, in all religious perspectives, from apophatic to kataphatic contemplation. See *Humus* 4–8, on “Foundational Prayer,” accessed December 1, 2017, <http://www.philipmcshane.org/humus>.

⁶¹ *Method in Theology*, the last words on page 3.

⁶² “The present section” is an expression that occurs in *Insight* eleven times. See also note 14 of *The Allure of the Compelling Genius of History* on page 239. In that book I devised the linguistic feedback of identifying “the present section” as the reader, you, a present section of being.

⁶³ I quote Gerald Manley Hopkins’ sonnet, “The Starlit Night.” The sonnet brackets the reflections of the third chapter, “The Canons of Economic Meaning” in *The Allure of the Compelling Genius of History*, 27–39. Add the poise of the following note.

⁶⁴ *For a New Political Economy*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan vol. 21, ed. Philip McShane (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 20. This is the beginning of a page-long, powerful paragraph on fundamental economic transformation that fits the larger issue of effective global functionality.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁶⁶ I quote from the conclusion of Ezra Pound’s poem, “Commission.” See note 60 above.

⁶⁷ I am recalling the conclusion to James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*. I first used that book as a symbolic paralleling of functional collaboration in a little book of 1971, *Plants and Pianos*, where the ‘Plants’ part paralleled Joyce’s book *Ulysses*. Later the book became chapters one and two of *The Shaping of the Foundations* (University Press of America, 1976, available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.org/published-books>). The paralleling with Joyce is meant, paradoxically, to discourage paralleling Lonergan with other thinkers. Lonergan’s heuristic, of course, massively sublates the reach of Joyce.

⁶⁸ This is the title of section 12 of a key essay of mine on this entire issue, “The Importance of Rescuing *Insight*,” *The Importance of Insight: Essays in Honour of Michael Vertin*, edited by John J. Liptay and David S. Liptay (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 339–376. But the word itself is worthy of reverie-reading, so that it stir the neuromolecules of your axial superego, swivening the “*moi intime*” (*Insight*, 495).

“river run past Eve and Adam”⁶⁹ Might you step into this river once more for the first time? Have I sentenced you in minimal adequacy—sense-tensed in the best sends⁷⁰—to “a sentence that, when it is finished, will be the beginning of a chapter on certain problems of beginning”?

Thought on method is apt to run in some one of three channels. In the first, method will be conceived more as an art than as a science. It is to be learnt not from books or lectures but in the laboratory or in the seminar. What counts is the example of the master, the effort to do likewise, his comments on one's performance. Such, I think, must be the origin of all thought on method for such thought has to be reflection on previous achievement. Such, also, will always remain the one way in which the refinements and subtleties proper to specialized areas will be communicated.

There are, however, bolder spirits. They select the conspicuously successful science of their time. They study its procedures. They formulate precepts. Finally, they propose an analogy of science. Science properly so called is the successful science they have analyzed. Other subjects are scientific in the measure that they conform to its procedures and, in the measure they do not, they are something less than scientific. So Sir David Ross remarked of Aristotle: “Throughout the whole of his works we find him taking the view that all other sciences than the mathematical have the name of science only by courtesy, since they are occupied with matters in which contingency plays a part.”⁷¹ So too today the English word, science, means natural science. One descends a rung or more in the ladder when one speaks of behavioral or human sciences. Theologians finally often have to be content if their subject is included in a list not of sciences but of academic disciplines.

Clearly enough, these approaches to the problem of method do little to advance the less successful subjects. For in the less successful subject, precisely because it is less successful, there is a lack of masters to be followed and of models to be imitated. Not will recourse to the analogy of science be of any use, for that analogy, so far from extending a helping hand to the less successful, is content to assign them a lower rank in the pecking order. Some third way, then, must be found and, even though it is difficult and laborious, that price must be paid if the less successful subject is not to remain a mediocrity or slip into decadence and desuetude.⁷²

⁶⁹ The beginning of *Finnegans Wake*. See note 67 above: might the paralleling of the first three paragraphs of that book with *Method in Theology*'s first three paragraphs help you to meet “a kidscad buttended a bland old isaac” Newton in the second paragraph of both books and seed the third-paragraph need for an “upturnpikepointandplace” “through all Christian minstrelsy”? (Joyce's third paragraph)

⁷⁰ Were I to send a signaled beginning focus for the *moi intime*'s grappling with the problem I would appeal for a kataphatic poise of “the present section” over general bias as “sitting in the air,” kindle-wooden in chapter seven of *Insight*.

⁷¹ W.D. Ross, *Aristotle's Prior and Posterior Analytics*, Oxford, 1949, p. 14. Cf. pp. 51 ff. [Lonergan's note.]

⁷² *Method in Theology*, 3–4.

Appendix: Correspondence with *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies*

A. Letter from Patrick Byrne, Co-editor, *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies*

July 10, 2018

Dear Phil,

Thank you for submitting your article, “A Paradigmatic Panel Dynamic for (Advanced) Students (of Religion)” to *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies*. I am sorry to inform you that the referees have not recommended the publication of your article in *MJLS*. With this letter I am enclosing the referee’s report on your article.

Sincerely,

Patrick H. Byrne
Co-editor, *MJLS*

B. Editors’ Review

This submission reports about an invitation to several people, to participate in a panel at the 2018 West Coast Method Institute on the topic identified in the title. This report is then followed by reflections on four important passages from *Method in Theology*. There is no record of which panelists declined the invitation, or which accepted, nor what those who accepted the invitation had to say. McShane’s own reflections on the four passages call upon the reader to enter more seriously into the reading of those passages, and to become shocked by the poverty of our present situation. The call is intensified by references to visionaries from Vancouver Sihks to Nadia Boulanger and Vaslav Nijinsky and George Eliot among others. If I had to classify the submission, I would say it is prophetic, fully award [sic] of the great irony in ever “classifying” anything as prophetic. In this prophetic mode, the submission includes a not too subtle rebuke to “jump-start a repentance from ‘academic disciplines’ Lonergan studies” with a footnote to the phrase “academic disciplines” from *Method in Theology*.

I have no doubt of the intellectual and spiritual poverty of our present condition. I have no doubt that in the future times when Lonergan’s work has been accepted and effected a reorientation of academic disciplines, things will be much different, and we would hope, much better. But at present those involved in “Lonergan studies” – those doing the best they can to learn from one another, whether housed in academic departments or not – need insights as much if not more than prophetic exhortations. *MJLS* does the best it can to meet the prior need. While I do not doubt the need for prophetic exhortations, *MJLS* is not the venue for this submission.

The editors of *MJLS* do take seriously the issue raised in this submission about the state of the academic disciplines. They are considering steps that *MJLS* might take to address this concern more seriously in the near future.

C. Reply to Patrick Byrne

Dear Pat,

a sad business, this. The referee shockingly misread the article. It is not a narrow report, but a full heuristic paradigm. And oh, yes, my stuff is, I would claim the referee's word, "Prophetic". So, then, the little tinkering mentioned at the end of his[her] comments is a joke: "The editors of *MJLS* do take seriously the issue raised in this submission about the state of the academic disciplines. They are considering steps that *MJLS* might take to address this concern more seriously in the near future." That not-near future, if the seriousness blossomed into honesty, should develop in taking Lonergan seriously when he clearly shifts the norms of the usual trivial comparison-work to the control of a genetic sequence of prior efforts to understanding whatever. See *Insight*, the two paragraphs on the turn of pages: (i) 603-4 (ii) 609-10. And yes, indeed, there is some jump-start needed, but it seems sadly decades away.

Perhaps there is some good in placing before you my bluntness in the final note (28) of my last essay of the "Tincture of System" series. *Tinctures of System* 6: "{M(W₃)^{0ΦT}}"⁴ Converging the Fifth Column: I Crest my Case."

They are indeed, happily, my last note and my last series: it is time to halt my long climbing scattered efforts to share Lonergan's 29-yr-old yearnings of Essay on Fundamental Sociology and venture into practical and disturbing nudges – LOL – such as this.

So here you are, "a measure of needed bluntness" that Crowe talked about in 1964 (*Spirit as Inquiry*, 27):

Tinctures 6, note 28:

A final note in this essay, and in my essaying of 60 years. That I ended in an aesthetic mode probably provides some with an excuse to ignore my efforts. So, let me end with some dull remarkable barking remarkings.

It seems to me that Lonergan's disciples have little imagining of what he was reaching for. The issue is and was a science of progress. The solution is and was a critical creatively effective genetics of the global thinkings and doings regarding that progress. My regular analogy of growing a sunflower is obvious. Since my audience is primarily Christian, I narrow my musings here to Christian theology. Jesus arrives at the fullness of time—we could count to three and had the linguistic signs to contextualize such an achievement—but we were comfortably settled into truncated consciousness and a fussy optimism about initial meanings. Let's skip the mystical stuff here and think of that trail as it messed on through the centuries of patristics and councils in the putterings of generations "whose consciousness is unmitigated by any tincture of systematic meaning" (*Method in Theology*, 32: see also 278, 309), to a large extent, and clearly untheoretic in delineating the message that was and is in Jesus' minding. In later centuries the putterings delineated that minding, well, in what we can recognize as the usual narrow-minded tracts of theology that *de facto* narrow the minds of theologians and their victim-students and "the Cargo" (See [Vignette 19](#)).

Lonergan's search for an answer "Do you know His Kingdom?" (*Essay in Fundamental Sociology*, conclusion) finally bubbled out beyond the contemporary imagination in the key problem of locating the genetics of that Kingdom in an effective cumulatively redemptive, science:

we are leaping now, remarkably and markedly, over the second paragraph of *Method in Theology*, chapter one: the bold spiriting that has mislead and shrunken us through more than two millennia. The answer comes in Lonergan's meaning of *Comparison* when it is fully, and genetically, sifted up out of the program of *Method in Theology* 250. What is to emerge eventually is a mind-boggling fresh effective genetic perspective on the ongoing Son-flowering of the Kingdom—including its eschatological realization. Further, the treatise Lonergan heralded in *Insight* 763–4 is to be not only the heart of the entire enterprise of theology, but also its basis in the teaching of theology. I think back now to the stupid messing of my first year theology (1961–2) titled “On the Church,” all the more startling in that I had come from the real world of lecturing graduate physics and mathematics. Pause for a shot at imagining the rest of a degree in Christian theology with such a new mind-boggling scientific beginning, “outshining everything since the rise of Christianity” (“Questionnaire on Philosophy,” *CWL* 17, 353).

My claim, expressed already in the beginning of the second paragraph, but now with some backing, is that most likely you just cannot effectively have that shot, a shot at breaking the locked neuromolecular patterns in your cranium. The “some backing” is just a few hundred of my words jostled onto the surface of those fixed sick patterns. Lonergan studies will continue in the ruts of the past until a “not numerous center” (*CWL* 4, 245) becomes numerous enough to think their way effectively out of present gross global—billionaires or buttons—misery. “We are not there yet” (*For a New Political Economy*, 306), nor will there be a jumpstart towards “effective intervention in history” (*Phenomenology and Logic*, 306) until Faithfilled fantasy effectively replaces the junkyard that is present religious reflection and prayer. That fantasy would lift the symbolic heuristic, $\{\mathbf{M}(\mathbf{W}_3)^{\theta\Phi\Gamma}\}^4$, into humble effective climbing. But in what sense can I thus “Crest my Case”? As far as present theologians are concerned, my Case's Crest flags a life of dead see strolls.