

Chapter 4. Foundations

The Introduction indicated that this short chapter on foundations would be selective and focused. A previous essay, Cantower 40, on "Functional Foundations", is conveniently available on the website www.philipmcshane.ca, a thirty page invitation that is already a summary. Indeed, the entire Cantower series, surging up from previous searchings for foundations, is a climbing map. Here I wish to home in on the shift mentioned in the Preface, placing it in the context of some pointers regarding the special categories that I have not given before.

First, a pause over the final page of *Method's* chapter on Dialectic. The issue is God's gift of his love and its objectification. We are, by common Christian consent, in the realms of mystery: how are we, then to talk of it? Are we capable of talking about it? I find it useful to home in on that question by attending to Rahner's reaction to the 1969 *Gregorianum* presentation by Lonergan of functional specialization. I have dealt with this on previous occasions and I would note that from the beginning of the next paragraph to footnote 8 below I am quoting from an article of mine on our participation in the Satisfaction of ChrISt which is listed as Joisting 8 on the website.

Karl Rahner's brief reflection on functional specialization appeared almost immediately after the publication of Lonergan's essay. Rahner was astute enough to recognize the reach of the division of labour of which Lonergan wrote.¹ But then he identified and focused on what for him was a deep flaw in its application to theology. I

¹Rahner is responding to the version of chapter 5 of *Method* published in the *Gregorianum* in 1969. Karl Rahner, "Die theologische Methodologie Lonergan's scheint mir so generisch zu sein, dass sie eigentlich auf jede Wissenschaft passt", Karl Rahner, "Kritische Bemerkungen zu B.J.F.Lonergan's Aufsatz: 'Functional Specialties in Theology'", *Gregorianum* 51(1971), 537. In the translation of Conn O'Donovan made by him during a recent period of our collaboration, "Lonergan's theological methodology seems to me to be so generic that it actually suits every science." I am indebted to Conn for points made in the text regarding mystery and analogy.

must quote at length.

“The methodology of Lonergan abstracts

b) from the fundamental fact that all theological statements, as theological, are related not to God as some object or other within the field of categorial objects, but to God as the incomprehensible mystery, that can never be subsumed, in the same method, among the objects of the other sciences. For a theological method must surely make clear and legitimize the singularity of the language that goes with it, namely, that it is precisely about God as such, as distinct from the language used in all other sciences. Of that, however, I can detect nothing in this Lonergan sketch of theological method. In Lonergan’s article the words ‘God’ and ‘Jesus Christ’, do indeed occur, but only as indications of material objects with which the science of theology, as distinct from other sciences, engages, and not as words from whose content what is proper to theological method as such must be established, and which therefore must indicate something like formal objects of theology (or taken together as the formal object).”²

It is massively important to the entire future of the project of hodic re-cycling to focus this challenge. Facing it is another matter, a matter of building into integral communal metaphysics an *ethos* resonant with its axiomatic solution. But at least we can here point to elements of the axioms as a focusing strategy: these are various axioms of what Lonergan calls “the position”, but enlarging his description of it so as to include explicitly axioms of infinity and intentionality required to lift out of the realm of casual insights the limitation of human inquiry to proportionate being.³

Here a suggestive diagramming must suffice. Consider, then, the realm of being as represented by a circle, and the limitation of human inquiry as represented by its

²I am using here the translation of Conn O’Donovan.

³Lonergan gives a brief inadequate description of “the position” on *Insight* 388[413]. It is, however, adequate pedagogically and as an existential challenge for the reader: indeed it is the central challenge of the book, a hypothesis to be accepted or rejected that eventually blossoms into “the issue of truth” in chapter 17.

complete darkening. That darkness has degrees, but only the two degrees at the upper limit concern us at present. There is the darkness regarding an absolute of supernatural companionship to be focused by a precise inverse insight.⁴ There is the darkness regarding the question, “What, then, is being”, that is focused by an inverse insight of critical method.⁵ The image of that double focusing is a centering of the circle darkness in a precise point, leaving the circle in clear.⁶ But the methodical reality of the focus is a liberation of science, all sciences equally, from obscurity. Returning to Rahner’s problem, one finds - but only through a series of contextualizing conversions - that one can deal in equal clarity with the incarnation that is God and the incarnation that is a dog. The word “Jesus” then escapes its due radical mysteriousness: the muddled mysteriousness of analogical concepts or of ill-defined theological method is replaced by a triply-luminous triple affirmation.⁷

All that, of course, is my foundational talk turning round images and metaphors.

⁴See Lonergan, *De Deo Trino I. Pars Doctrinalis*, Gregorian Press, Rome, 1964. The key point is in page 274, but the entire thesis 5 (249-298), on mystery and its relation to understanding, is relevant. I recommend in particular, in this present context, the powerful reflection of 276-298 on scripture and the psychological analogy. Does it startle you when I suggest that the *Old Testament* is primarily about the events that are the analogue of the divine processions? Are present Old Testament studies, then, like a desiccated tadpole waiting for the waters of interiority? There is a parallel here between such studies and the present state of medicine: see Quodlibet 20, the subsection on “The Future of Medicine: A Christmas Carol”.

⁵There is a key shift in *Insight* given by the existential focus - *exigence*-lifted - on ‘then’ in the question, “What, then, is being” (*Insight*, 642[665]). The final pages of chapter 19 move to the issue of critical method.

⁶There is a nice analogy here between Brouwer’s fixed point theorem and the translatability of the heart and soul of theology through the ages, across languages.

⁷ The “triple” is familiar to students of philosophy and theology: affirmation, negation, eminence. The “triply-luminous” refers to what I symbolize as “(about)³” (see the following note). The third order of consciousness suggested by Lonergan is methodology as a histo-systematic study of methods: method is the second order reflection on the first order-spontaneity of performance. The luminousness **about** the “ongoing genesis of method” is then the normative ideal. Link this with thinking about the universal viewpoint.

Rahner really finds his place in dialectic discussions but here he is a representative figure. Foundational talk is *per se* direct speech of - more precisely (about)³ - fantasy and recycling.⁸

As I mentioned in the second paragraph above, I added in up to here reflections on Rahner from a previous text. Footnotes 7 and 8 talk of a summary indication of the meaning of (about)³ : we have had more than that in the previous chapter. So, back now with this larger context to that page 266 of *Method*. Sense your own orientation in the matter, and bring it to bear on the five sets of special categories listed on 290-1. Do you not find yourself in sympathy with Rahner? Is not the objectification of ‘the gift of God’s love’ (266) and the objectification of religious experience that is “the first set of categories” (290) clouded with mystery? Indeed, does not Lonergan make this point in his mention of the “cloud of unknowing” (266)? Let us then have a shot at unclouding the knowing that is special categorial.

We have gone some distance towards that in so far as we make our own the points already developed, about doubly focusing the darkness. But let us push more concretely, existentially, ontically.⁹ We must advert to, attend to, and tolerate the incarnate reality that we are, especially when we are tuned to the obediential¹⁰ best in our restless hearts. We move, and are moved, to think and talk of such attunement within any differentiation of consciousness that is not that brutal reductive

⁸Section 2 of *Joistings I* spells out the meaning of the peculiar usage (about)³, or any other such bracketing, but the previous note gives a summary indication of its meaning.

⁹See *Phenomenology and Logic*, 311-13.

¹⁰The obediential is a complex topic within finality that is implicit in various Lonergan reflections, but one finds a good starting context from the two comments, *in situ*, in *Verbum*: “potency that no creature can actuate is obediential and its act, by definition, is supernatural” (219); “we may ask whether this neglect of natural potency has a not some bearing on unsatisfactory conceptions of obediential potency” (149). See also the index to *Phenomenology and Logic*, under *Exigence, Supernatural*.

differentiation of reduced common sense which snakes round evil. That movement and thinking and talking are to be cyclically objectified with precision in foundations and lifted forward in foundations fantasy. "The basic fulfilment of our conscious intentionality,"¹¹ thematized, calls for yet further implementable thematization.

But let us be clear on the present challenge in that regard. Pages 290-91 of *Method* are no more a serious thematization of the fulfilment than chapter 7 is a serious thematic of hermeneutics: we shall come to that problem in chapter 9. Yet the proleptic hint helps. The "far larger" work was abandoned, cancered out from within and without.¹² The limping five-part description of what is named religious experience points, in pre-Linnaean fashion, to massive needs: "there are needed studies of religious interiority: historical, phenomenological, psychological, sociological."¹³ There is need for a stand against "Obstacles to the Control of Meaning"¹⁴ and a perhaps lonely stand in heuristic precision "to frame the terms and relations that will express that experience."¹⁵

Such terms are to be found in a heuristics of the infolding of energy and the emergence of organisms whose chemical patterns mesh with escape-bent in-toned field-toned forms.

¹¹*Method in Theology*, 105.

¹² The story of Lonergan's struggle to hold to the world of theory against a surrounding cancer remains to be told.

¹³*Method in Theology*, 290.

¹⁴To appear in *Method: A Journal of Lonergan Studies* in 2006.

¹⁵*Method in Theology*, 290. How that need is to me met, in the context of the best current genetic systematics, is a problem that coincides with the cyclic functioning of the specialties. But first there is the task of struggling towards the metaphysical equivalents of "religious experience". Certainly I could tackle it here, but I prefer to leave it as an exercise for the moment.

It is a vitally important exercise in the move to generating a globally communicable perspective on divine presence in history.

The terms, and their interconnections, must move within a new grammar of ascent, a linguistic feedback how-talk¹⁶ resonant with the luminous metaphysical word-by-word equivalence that anticipates, in a perspectivism that is explanatory if thin, a futurology of the organisms Socrates and Jesus that is an ever-fresh beginning. “Thus, if Socrates [and Jesus] has a human central form (formal cause), he will be a man (primary formal effect), be capable of understanding (necessary, secondary, intrinsic formal effect), occasionally understand (conditioned, secondary, intrinsic formal effect), have a father (extrinsic formal effect).”¹⁷ Have a father, a Father? So we edge towards the third set of special categories, “the loving source of our love,”¹⁸ but do so now in a trail following the reachings of John’s Gospel and Origin’s prayerful musing.

What is that trail? It looks to future stretchings. It will rise to ask fresh questions of the narrative of the ChrIST’s pilgrimage, of his knowing and loving, and “in a systematization of Jung’s terminology” but within that new explanatory perspectivism, ask freshly about his ego, shadow, persona, anima. Was Jesus “an ego with a message for mankind linked to a diffident shadow”?¹⁹

But the beginning of the trail, the self-study of the organism that begins²⁰...., is a post-Augustinian turn²¹ that demands a shift of metaphysical equivalence from the a wide range of descriptive terms like “*religious experience*”. Yes, “the functional

¹⁶“How-Language: Works?” is the title of the second chapter of McShane, *A Brief History of Tongue. From Big Bang to Coloured Wholes*, Axial Press, Halifax, 1998, which opens this door. Chapter four there continues the drive for a re-structuring of heuristic language.

¹⁷*Insight*, 506-7[530].

¹⁸*Method in Theology*, 291.

¹⁹*Insight*, 194[217].

²⁰I refer to that key text on *Insight* 464[489].

²¹See below, notes 27, 28, 29.

specialty, foundations, will derive its first set of categories from religious experience,"²² but the will to derive must be helped by a will to lift that very sentence into the strange words and world of a new perspective, "an adapted and specialized auxiliary ever ready to offset every interference with intellect's unrestricted finality."²³ What, then, is the foundational meaning of those two descriptive words, so regularly unwelcome to the ear of the lonely global groaning of *Romans* 8: 19-23?

It is a question whose answer can be hinted at, vaguely, by vague appeals to a new undeveloped metaphysics. The organism that is human has an obediencial capacity-for-performance²⁴ meshed into a galaxy of conjugate forms and acts that need humble heuristic trans-cultural specification if we are to faithfully translate the descriptive words *religious experience* into both a tower-climbing theoretic and a street-valued resonant. The context of that translation, a millennial task, is the Tower of Cycling collaboration that was seeded by Lonergan 40 years ago, is being seeded by history's multiple fragmentations.

Within that context, to be developed over decades and centuries, we pilgrims can come to ever-fresh precisions in our thinking and talking about our ising, and indeed that thinking and talking that is tower-wise can move us comfortably and comfortingly from position to poosition, the homely organic darkness not of immortal diamond but of neuromolecularity. I have written in one particular Cantower of the slow climb towards that incarnate precision, but now I am pointing beyond that treatment of four years ago.²⁵

Attention, with Lonergan, to a broader context, however, is worthwhile here. "It is time to turn to Augustine, a convert from nature to spirit, a person that, by God's

²²*Method in Theology*, 290.

²³*Insight*, 726[747].

²⁴Place pp. 464[489] ff in the context mentioned in note 10.

²⁵I refer to the basic treatment of the autobiographic challenge sketched in Cantower 9.

grace, made himself what he was, a subject that may be studied but, most of all, must be encountered in the outpouring of his self-revelation and self-communication."²⁶ We meet that man insofar as we shift from the outer word *is* (*is? is! is.*) to the inner word in its spirit-haunting of neutrality,²⁷ "a word that is before all sound."²⁸

This is an enormously difficult adventure for the advanced sympathizer with Augustine and Lonergan.²⁹ It is part of the larger adventure so quietly named in chapter 16 of *Insight*, placed in the frontispiece of this book, an almost impossible human come-about: "So it comes about that the extroverted subject visualizing extensions and experiencing duration gives place to the subject oriented to the objective of the unrestricted desire to know and affirming beings differentiated by certain conjugate potencies, forms, and acts grounding certain laws and frequencies."³⁰ And the issue indeed is climbing to and beyond that chapter 16, but now with the refining help of the metaphysics of *Verbum* glided over in *Insight*, yet transformed by *Insight's* invitation.

²⁶Lonergan, *Verbum. Word and Idea in Aquinas*, 6. See also the note on the word *encountered* given on 254. I have no doubt that Lonergan's meaning of **encounter**, and of this entire Preface, is vastly larger than his *Insight* meaning of intersubjectivity. Helpful here is an effort to ingest Lonergan's reflection on *field, ontic, subject-as-subject* indexed in the post-*Insight* work, *Phenomenology and Logic*.

²⁷This if, of course, continuous with the general push towards interiority that Lonergan students talk of all too lightly. It is massively difficult to reach towards, around, about, those inner experiences. It seems to me, for instance, that the confusion about feelings and values would fade if attention on the reality called judgment of value was genuinely in focus, infocused. On this see Quodlibet 19, "The Solution to the Problem of Feelings in Lonergan Studies".

²⁸*Verbum*, 7, note 8. Reaching this is a tremendous personal experience, an Augustinian turn that can so easily be missed by readers of *Method in Theology*. See also the next note's references.

²⁹See *Phenomenology and Logic*, the index under *Augustine*.

³⁰*Insight*, 514[537]. Our context is now the absolutely supernatural, so there are included the laws of the Cross and of Satisfaction within "a divinely sponsored collaboration in the transmission and application of the truths of the solution; it is a mystery in the threefold sense of psychic force, of sign, and of symbol.....". *Ibid.*, 729[750].

At the end of such a climb what might one mean in one's reading and self-reading of Matthew 16:16? What is this inner neurospiraling that is the reality of the noise, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"? The what-question itself - oneself - in the new context, Kontext, then, THEN,³¹ becomes luminous to some Towering extent.

That is, if you belong to the creative minority of the Tower community, the Ovalteam. The extent and the extending of the luminosity, this will be a focal topic and drive of these remaining chapters. But let us conclude this initial musing with some broader pointers on encounter and its global flow.

Lonergan writes of an self-intimacy of the subject-as-subject where *as* points not to abstract but to that intimacy.³² And in that sense there is here reached, or reached for, an intimacy that is verbally conveyed by the suggestion that subject-as-subject meets Christ-as-ChrISt. And in so far as that is the character of the Ovalteam's living, we enter - might it be in this millennium? - the third stage of meaning, post-axial times, a new Christian and global realism. That new realism, a luminous presence in the creative minority, is to radiate out from the ever- climbing contemporary plain of tower-cycling, ex-plain³³ to plain people, so that "the collaboration of intellect"³⁴ becomes "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 together in charity, to the joyful, courageous, whole-hearted, yet intelligently controlled performance of the tasks set by

³¹Cantower V, with title "Metaphysics THEN" points to a sublating of the stances associated with east and west: it points to a shift in life-striving that is the secular parallel to the shift of this book.

³²See *Phenomenology and Logic*, the index under *Subject, as subject*.

³³The conclusion of chapter 3 of gives some notion of the relationship of ex-plain-ing between the level of Tower science and the plain of common sense.

³⁴The second last section of chapter 20 of *Insight* mentions such collaboration 29 times.

world order in which the problem of evil is not suppressed but transcended.”³⁵

The ultimate transcendence is a dreamfully distant matter of matter, or energy, infolded in layers over fourteen billion years, infolded in recent millions of years to patterns of chemistry with an escape velocity called spiritual, calling Tri-home the total patterned energy of human pilgrimage through the active presence of four-fold absolute supernature in the Organism that is God, ChrIst.³⁶

³⁵*Insight*, 723-24[745].

³⁶ See note 37 of chapter 10. This points to a key achievement of the come-about of the Frontispiece quotation. And, of course, part of that turnabout is to conceive of the special categories in their full explanatory meaning. No doubt some had hoped that this chapter would do that. But it is a massive challenge e.g. of lifting the forms of Faith, Hope and Charity, that Thomas deals with in his medieval brilliance into the context of that tricky part of chapter 15 of *Insight*, 464[489] and following. See Quodlibet 3 for some clues.