

“FORCING ATTENTION”¹

There has been no response from my senior colleagues in Lonergan studies to my various invitations, over fifty years, to dialogue, but most recently expressed in an appeal to them to share their views on the website [forum](#). They are busy with old ways of doing theology and philosophy, and, worse, busy in preparing now to again misdirect, in the autumn, the next generations. A few of those in the next generations have shown interest in the forum discussion and the related essays. Might that be a start,² or are we Christians stuck for this millennium in present little ponds,³ with no sense of the hearts screaming for an Ocean of Being?⁴

But I had best now write with the disgust of a scientist about offensive non-scientific liberal academic behavior.⁵

¹ *Insight*, 423.

² “a perhaps not numerous center . . . strong enough to refuse half measures and insist on complete solutions even though it has to wait.” (The concluding words of “Dimensions of Meaning,” *Collection*, *CWL* 4, 245.)

³ A memory here of my first week (Easter week, 1961) in Lonergan’s company. He had escaped Rome to give lectures in Dublin, and remarked—as we stood, in a Jesuit House refectory, under a dusty unrecognized Caravaggio discovered as such later—about a walled-in Catholic theology after Trent with professors being “big frogs in little ponds.”

⁴ I think, oddly here, of the convent lives of women, searching for a Loaf of Life. They need something more than the suggestions about contemplation of Teresa of Avila. They need more refined answers about our end than that of the good Thérèse of Lisieux to her elder sister Pauline—Mother Agnes—a few weeks before her death: “God will sip you up like a drop of dew” (*St. Therese of Lisieux: Her Last Conversations*, translated from the original manuscripts by John Clarke O.C.D., ICS Publications, Washington D.C., 1977, 37). They need a minding loving meeting with the Minding Loving Jesus, accelerating over whatting-decades, a minding that becomes a global Interior Lighthouse for all pilgrims, that is to swing from dim guiding grey to glorious dawn in our common eternal neurodynamics.

⁵ Here my appeal is to a legitimate if startling parallel between the “academic disciplines” approach mentioned at the end of the first page (3) of *Method in Theology* and the liberal tradition of nation states vigorously condemned by Lonergan in the 1935–36 “Essay in Fundamental Sociology,” reprinted in Michael Shute, *Lonergan’s Early Economic Writings*, University of Toronto Press, 2010, 16–44. “Liberalism is for the destruction of civilization.” (*Ibid.*, 16). The parallel might wake up some few to effectively turn from page 3 of *Method* to page 4, to find the “cumulative and progressive

I write, as a scientist, indeed now, in my 86th year, identifying my effort as clearly in the fourth specialty of those specialties described all to briefly by Lonergan in the mid-1960s. I edged into that science in 1956, climbing up from the most elementary zone of graduate studies, physics, into Lonergan’s search for a way of bringing into effect the final prayer of *Method in Theology*, “may they all be one.”⁶ My efforts of sixty years have occasionally been accused of being clouded either by Joycean puns or by mystical poises. There are few puns in this essay, and there never has been a mystical cloud in my sky.

Lonergan’s problem of the mid-thirties was freshly posed at the end of *Insight*: his search continued to be for an effective geohistorically-unifying treatise on the mystical body.⁷ The answer lay within his identification of *Comparison* as the methodological heart—yes, heart and Heart—of his transposed metaphysics: the Object of that methodological attention being the genesis and reality of the Eschatological Heart of God. Our pilgrim- and escha- problem is “Understanding the Object”⁸ effectively, and our best shot at that is a genetic sequencing of all prior shots at effectively understanding “and distinguishing the successive stages of this, the greatest of all works,”⁹ finitude’s “joy and zeal,”¹⁰ in the Three-climb to the neurodynamics of the eternal Jesus.

I summarize thus, Fermat-style, my Last Theorem, dodging footnotes oddly intimated below.¹¹ What, I ask my colleagues, is wrong with my theorem? Why the gross silence in the

results” of “a third way, difficult and laborious.” “Humanity must first discover its law and then apply it; to discover the law is a long process and to apply it a painful process.” “Essay in Fundamental Sociology,” 39.

⁶ *Method in Theology*, 367.

⁷ *Insight*, 763–64.

⁸ *Method in Theology*, 156.

⁹ *The Triune God: Systematics*, CWL 12, 491.

¹⁰ The final words of *Insight* 722. There is a commentary on this magnificent page on love and repentance in Philip McShane, “*Insight* and the Interior Lighthouse 2020–2050,” *Divyadaan: A Journal of Education and Philosophy*, 28/2 (2017) 279–300.

¹¹ There is no way to add a lengthy explanatory comment on my theorem that would parallel such a venture as Andrew Wiles’ massive work. Still, there is my integrative work, *The Allure of the Compelling Genius of History* that brings *Insight* and *Method* together, a jump off to getting to grips with the identification of *Comparison*’s focus on Christ’s Symphony as, and in, *The Road to Religious Reality* (Axial Publishing, 2012). A recent context, containing a sketch of the relevant extension of Aquinas’ Eschatology, is Philip McShane, “*Insight* and the Trivialization of History,” *Divyadaan: A Journal of Education and Philosophy*, 28/1 (2017) 105–132.

face of this shocking scientific claim? You need not enter into Lonergan's subtle way of meeting this horrid "lack of uniformity"¹² in Lonergan studies and in theology. Tell me, in convenient *haute vulgarization*, what is wrong with my weave forward from Lonergan's hope of the mid-1930s, a weave that took deeply serious the final achievement of his grim but glorious thirty year climb to the mid-1960s?

Charity is an eternal fire of optimism and 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 unit of action of man, for the effective rule of sweetness and light, for a fuller manifestation of what charity loves, Wisdom Divine, the Word made Flesh.

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

'In the last days the mountain 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. Any 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 in 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.¹³

¹² *Method in Theology*, 259: line 19 of that brilliant 16-line identification and self-identification of "Forcing Attention."

¹³ The conclusion to Lonergan's "Essay in Fundamental Sociology," 43-44.