

The Heuristics of a Fourth Stage of Meaning

Prologue

These little essays are efforts to get us moving towards the fourth stage of meaning, a distant reality, so we patiently putter along. In this essay what I assemble is the claim that the fourth stage of meaning was slimly identified by Lonergan in 1934. 85 years later I have managed to work out a reasonable heuristics and indeed expressed it sufficiently in, “Method in Theology: From $[1 + 1/n]^{nx}$ to $\{M (W_3)^{\theta\Phi T}\}^4$,” *Journal of Macrodynamic Analysis*, vol. 10 (2018) 105–135. The “[1 + 1/n]^{nx}” refers to a transitional effort of Lonergan in the summer of 1954¹; his fuller leap occurred in February 1965, a leap he communicated to me the following summer, so fifty years later it has taken decent heuristic shape. The above title, however, only emerged in 2008, when a paper by John Dadosky asking about a fourth stage of meaning nudged me to think out the character of such a fourth stage. All this is background stuff, placed therefore in a Prologue, giving a piece of the context that may or may not be relevant to your tackling the exercise I have in mind. So let us now move towards the *Duffy Exercise* proper,² which requires, following Lonergan, that we start with *Assembly*. If YOU look back to the first of these essays you will find that the first two references are to Planck and Kuhn, nudging you to think of transitions in sciences. That is what these exercises are about: assemble suggested transitions and let ye experts tackle the sieving of them in relation to the Standard Model in the particular science.

The Assembled

Obviously a brief statement of the Assembled is the right starting point. Just a title, perhaps, like Wiles title of his remarkable 100-page paper on Fermat’s Last Theorem. So, above you have my

¹ I quote from a letter of June 1954 from Lonergan to Fred Crowe: “The Method of Theology is coming into perspective. For the Trinity: Imago Dei in homine and proceed to the limit as in evaluating $[1 + 1/n]^{nx}$ as n approaches infinity. For the rest: ordo universi. From the viewpoint of theology, it is a manifold of unities developing in relation to one another and in relation to God, i.e., metaphysics as I conceive it but plus transcendent knowledge. From the viewpoint of religious experience, it is the same relations as lived in a development from elementary intersubjectivity (cf. Sullivan’s basic concept of interpersonal relations) to intersubjectivity in Christ (cf. the endless Pauline [suv- or] sun- compounds) on the sensitive (external Church, sacraments, sacrifice, liturgy) and intellectual levels (faith, hope, charity). Religious experience : Theology : Dogma :: Potency : Form : Act.”

² For information on that, check with jamesduffy <humanistasmorelia@gmail.com>

title trailed by 20 pages of discussion. Might I make the exercise easier, let you dodge this heavy trip? Well, let's take it that you are somewhat tuned into Lonergan's three stages. So, I simply quote the end of section 10.3 of chapter 3 of *Method in Theology*, where Lonergan notes, quoting some goodly names, that "intentionality analysis routed faculty psychology. The second stage of meaning is vanishing, and a third is about to take its place." We are in this third stage now, with Lonergan's followers suiting that stage to ongoing dialogue with the goodly names mentioned by Lonergan and others spread through the centuries. What then of the fourth stage? It is the stage described by Lonergan's brief answer in *Essay in Fundamental Sociology* to his question,

What is Progress?

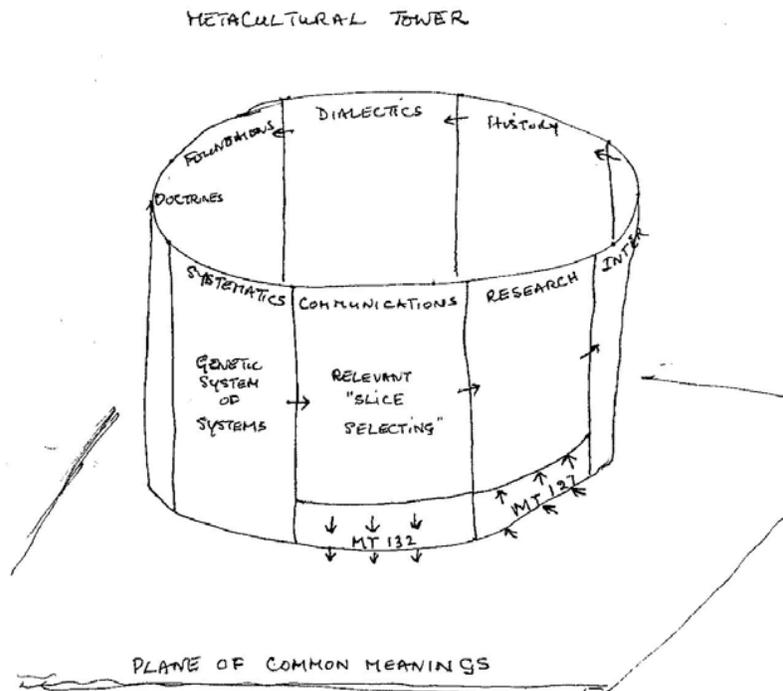
It is a matter of intellect. Intellect is understanding of sensible data. It is the guiding form, statistically effective, of human action transforming the sensible data of life. Finally, it is a fresh intellectual synthesis understanding the new situation created by the old intellectual form and providing a statistically effective form for the next cycle of human action that will bring forth in reality the incompleteness of the later act of intellect by setting it new problems.³

His sophisticated answer of 1934 is symbolized by me fully by a complex presentation of that dense symbol of the title of the *Journal of Macrodynamical Analysis* article that is way too much for this simple exercise, so let us settle for the component of that complex that is quite easily identified as a twist on the fifth chapter of *Method*, named by me W_3 , presented elementarily on the next page.⁴ Finally, I quote now the beginning of the last paragraph of chapter seven of *Method in Theology* as applicable to the venture of my dense assembly. "Is this a possible project? Might I suggest that the section on stages of meaning in Chapter Three offers a beginning?"⁵

³ *Essay in Fundamental Sociology, Lonergan's Early Economic Research*, edited with a commentary by Michael Shute, University of Toronto Press, 2010, 20.

⁴ The fuller version of this appears at the beginning of the fifth essay in this series.

⁵ *Method in Theology*, 173[163].



Epilogue

This addition to my essay both adds to the contexts hinted at in the Prologue and points to discomfiting features of the third objectification prescribed by Lonergan. How could Lonergan be so cruel?⁶

First, I should return to my writing of ten years ago about this fourth stage of meaning and give some indications about the ascent involved, an ascent of course calling for effective assent.⁷ Secondly, I turn to some musings over the challenge of the existential gap that this epilogue brings to the surface. “Insofar as there is to be a resolute and effective intervention in this

⁶ “We need to face up to our communal dodging of Lonergan’s brilliant cruelty at the conclusion of section 5 of chapter 10 of *Method in Theology*. That exercise leads you to AF: to find out just what your position is, especially with regard to the effort to understand in a serious fashion: how do you stand, Supermolecule, with regard to the two canons of complete explanation?” Philip McShane, *The Future: Core Precepts in Supramolecular Method and Nanochemistry*, Axial Publishing, 2019, 96.

⁷ “The Fourth Stage of Meaning: Essay 44 of the series *Field Nocturnes Cantower*,” *Meaning and History in Systematic Theology. Essays in Honor of Robert M. Doran S.J.*, edited by John D. Dadosky, Marquette University Press, 2009, 331–43. I refer to this volume below simply as *Meaning*.

historical process, on has to postulate that the existential gap must be closed.”⁸ Thirdly, I must pause over John Dadosky’s opening up of the topic that nudged me forward.⁹

I aim at brevity on my three topics. My own article weaves its way forward from my being nudged by a lecture by John Dadosky at the 2008 Boston Workshop. I achieve brevity by restricting myself to a single dense quotation, leaving, then, my ‘thirdly’ a contextualizing of that quotation. The quotation is skimpily comprehensible: but is that not a point of pushing and being pushed forward in a science?

The push came from a spread of efforts. There was a reach for a heuristics both of the Eschaton and of kataphatic prayer, and in their context there emerged the view both of paradise and prayer as resting and questioning in the real.* Pilgrim Tower-prayer would reach for a normative fullness that would mediate a proto-possessive community,* living towards resonance with the Word as God’s Explanation,* the Theory of the Speaker. Speaker, Spoke, Clasp circumincessionally echoed in the cherishing and caring of the spiraling tower cycles of human’s meaning—inwardly and in radiant symbol—history’s chemical zeal.* The practice of GEM2 would have as its neuroheart a focus on that echoing circumincession of the Circumincession.* The heartiness, a mustard seed, would be fostered by GEM3, a kataphatic cherishing of the loved subject. But would not this be a new stage of meaning, even though ecologically meshed with varieties of all other stages, thus shabbily sequential?¹⁰

Secondly, there is the problem of the “existential gap.” The four sections that follow in my article aim at weaving that problem into the meaning of the *X* that is the fourth stage of meaning. The *X*, I hope, brings to mind the *X* of Lonergan’s *Cosmopolis*.¹¹ I have spent sixty years struggling towards a better glimpse of it, and yes, it is a remote stage when truly “theology possesses a two fold relevance”¹² not in the aspiration of *Insight*’s Epilogue but in the radiance of an Eschatological heuristic, a heuristic open to engineering the Eschaton.

⁸ *CWL 18, Phenomenology and Logic*, 308.

⁹ John Dadosky, “Midwiving the Fourth Stage of Meaning: Lonergan and Doran,” pages 71–93 of the volume cited in note 7.

¹⁰ *Meaning*, 335–38. Note the spread of pages: it comes from the fact that the text quoted are a five line melody at the top of long dense footnotes, only asterisked here. The text and notes are available on my website: the essay was originally [Field Nocturne Cantower 44](#).

¹¹ “Still, what is cosmopolis? Like every other object of human intelligence, it is in the first instance an *X*, what is to be known when one understands.”(*Insight*, 263).

¹² *Insight*, 766, line 29.

Thirdly, I sadly note that this is a world very distant from the systematics of Dadosky and Doran. Nor, I would claim, is that systematics open to the world of the *X* of Cosmopolis, the *X* of the Fourth Stage of Meaning. As I did with my own essay, so here I replace the idea of summary with a suggestive lengthy quotation from Dadosky's paper.

In terms of interreligious dialogue, Lonergan's fascination with Whitson's *Coming Convergence of World Religions* anticipates a relationship, not of conformism or separate co-existence, but what Whitson calls *convergence*. For Whitson, the question of convergence concerns 'not one *or* many, but one *and* many,' and this seemingly 'unresolvable paradox' contains the seeds of convergence.¹³ The goal of such convergence is not a syncretization of religious belief systems but in integration and inter-relationship through the emergence of a common theological understanding.¹⁴

The gap, the existential gap, between us, is decently symbolized in my treatment of Whitson's work in four articles of *Divyadaan: Journal of Philosophy and Education*, vol. 30, no 1 (2019), where I was granted the privilege of filling the volume, edited by James Duffy and titled by him, "Religious Faith Seeding the Positive Anthropocene Age." The core pointing of the articles in the volume is towards an active meaning of convergence that includes a massive shift to kataphatic prayer, that shift neatly symbolized by the suggestion that *Insight* be a book of common prayer. This is worlds away from either Theresa of Avila¹⁵ or Ignatius of Loyola.¹⁶

And why not end, literally, on a high note? The note in question is the final note (note 51 on pages 112–13 of the book referenced in note 6 above).¹⁷ The key pointing in the note is to the

¹³ Whitson, *The Coming Convergence of World Religions*, 23-26.

¹⁴ *Meaning*, 84.

¹⁵ See my website article, [Economics 16](#): "Locating Teresa of Avila"

¹⁶ Dadosky ventures into this tradition in section 5 of his article, which he begins with the remark, "it is necessary to say something about the role of discernment and commitment at this stage" (*Meaning*, 84). What he, Doran, and Ignatius have to say about discernment here or elsewhere falls short of the reach, within a sophisticated standard model (see the following essay in the series) where the reach is for a luminous discernment of discernments of discernments. Present discussion of matters of Jesuit spirituality would benefit by taking seriously Lonergan's comment on the Order's philosophic education in "Questionnaire on Philosophy: Response", *CWL 17, Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980*.

¹⁷ *Essay in Fundamental Sociology*, 43–44. Recall now what might be called the central heuristic nudge of this 1934 essay. It is his brilliant answer on page 20 to the question "What is progress?" "It is a matter of intelligence. 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 next cycle of human action that will bring forth in reality the incompleteness of the later act

period after that great essay of 1934 where Lonergan's work on Aquinas led most of his disciples to close round studies of intellect and will that show little concern either for science or for the global horrors that have emerged from the negative Anthropocene.

of intellect by setting it new problems." Recall notes 1 and 25 above. The itch I write of in this essay, and in this book—starting with its seemingly simplistic revised 'box' diagram and the generic W-enzyme—is a strategic sensing that the *Method of The Future* book should have been first, should be first, with *Insight* to follow. 'Should have been' suggests a different life for Lonergan, and yes, I throw that fantasy-suggestion out to you. Think, for instance, how his first push was for a reform of the great need for the cycling in of a reformation towards a non-bureaucratic global economics. But his Thomist studies led him into minding minding, seeding in his psyche the venture of *Insight*, to be followed by an undetermined second volume. Think, further, wildly, of *Insight* as the first of his last quartets. Minding minding adequately is thus postponed in favor of some *Razumovski Quartets* weaved round the theme of cycling. The cycling would be tuned to a vague broad spiraling of 'intelligence' towards "a statistically effective form for the next cycle of human action." Those quartets would eventually lead to a blossoming of an effective minding of intelligence itself in the molecular reality of its wants. Leap crazily now to think of this little book as one of those *Razumovski Quartets*, and a crazier leap might see chapters 15, 16, 17, and 18 of *Insight*, as the four movements of that piece of the last quartets that is no. 16 of Opus 135. Is a later *Grosse Fugue* to be some leap into the music of the intentionalities in the W-enzyme? Meantime let our W-enzyme, within a tottering W_3 , Weave round—meeting Beethoven in meta-Ludwig fashion—*Fidelio's* Prisoner's Chorus, *O Welche Lust*: "Oh what lust, in the open air / to lift the breath easily / Only here, Only here, is Life."