

*Cantower XI***Lonergan: Interpretation and History****February 1, 2003**

Ho, Time Timeagen, Wake!
For if scientium [what's what]
can mute us nought, 'a thought,
a bought the Great Sommboddy
within the Omniboss perhaps
an artsacccord [hoot's hoot]
Might sing ums tumtim¹

In those forgettable days of teaching philosophy to mainly young ladies from 18 to over 80 there were occasionally moments of comic relief and one leaped to my mind this morning: the moment when the multitude poured into the exam hall and I was in charge, with precise things to say about carrying notes, talking, etc. Sometimes I deviated from the set statement: nobody seemed to be listening anyway. "Fasten your seat belts and put your minds in the uptight position" was my attempt at a humorous variant of where to put coat and handbag, unheard as the herd plunged for places. There was a massive need for satire and humour as the multitude settled for multiple-guess exams in psychology or memory-stress in the history of art. And here now there might be some good in my risking wit for the February feast of lights, the edge of Joyce's 121st birthday. But I am, of course, deadly serious: to recall Paddy Kavanagh, comedy is underdeveloped tragedy. My six-part invention mounts to a modest call for solitary heartholds of width, withness, witness, in the galactic flow of adolescent humanity. I bear witness here with anecdotes of my own grim struggle some of which should bring to you a grin against grimness: for the issue is your struggle and its bemused amused identification. Have you bought into the Great Somebody called Lonergan? Well, there's buy and by.

¹James Joyce, *Two Tales of Shem and Shaun: Fragments from Work in Progress*, London, 1932, 35-6.

11.1 Dialectic Wit

“A character of a splenetic and peevish humor should have a satirical wit. A jolly and sanguine humor should have a facetious wit. The former should speak positively; the latter, carelessly: for the former observes and shows things as they are; the latter rather overlooks nature, and speaks things as he would have them.”²

What is needed here is surely Aristophanes, or Congreve’s fellow-traveler, Swift.³ What is needed is a glimpse from the Far Side, or maybe, as Robby Burns would have it, a sight from alien ays. Or maybe what we need is a Judge Judy, who brightened my evening yesterday by speaking, in televised court, of “people with their heads up their behinds”. And perhaps I am closer to Judge Judy than to Dean Swift: all you will find here is a few gross pointers to the funny side of tight-assed Lonerganism.

But, taking a hint from Congreve, I should begin by speaking positively, showing a few things as they are. In later sections I will “speak things as I would have them” increasingly. So, I recall my summers teaching in Mexico City at the generous invitation of Paco Galan: we had endless hours of wit and humor together. But I recall those teaching hours now because of my memory of real width and witness and witness: women and men who had picked up enough of Lonergan’s meaning and mood to help the Indians, to cope, within their vocational areas, with daily insanities, to recognize the call of misery and music and merriment. My efforts there were at times directed to point some of them away

²William Congreve, “Concerning Humor in Comedy”(1696), reprinted in *European Theories of the Drama*, edited by Barrett H.Clark, Crown Publishers, New York, 1972, 164, from J.E.Springarn, *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*, (Oxford, 1909).

³Congreve attended the University of Dublin in the 1890s, where he met Jonathan Swift.

from Lonergan studies: they had got sufficient of the bent to point themselves and others towards modest patterns of self-rescue. This, of course, was very much the pattern of my teaching in Mt.St.Vincent University for twenty years. There was no reach towards graduate studies: the reach was towards the young ladies' understanding and surviving Friday night's hope of meeting Cosmo Polis shattered regularly by meeting Cosmo Dim y Dici. The point was to discover the loneliness identified by Lonergan and to foster that reach for understanding and being understood.

In contrast there was the International Lonergan Conference in Florida of thirty years ago.⁴ An elegant sufficiency of alcohol made its solemnity tolerable. Two solemn moments from my own afternoon group capture some of the satirical possibilities. We were a very learned group: I will only mention Elizabeth Anscombe, who is part of my tale. I knew her from the fifties, when I met also her strange but delightful children at various meetings of Catholic intellectuals.⁵ When she arrived in Florida she borrowed a copy of *Insight* to see what it was all about. Anyway, here we were, about eight solemn scholars grappling with meaning in the Florida Easter afternoon heat. American energy predominated while Elizabeth chain-smoked cigars. But there were those marvelous moments when someone would pose a question and Elizabeth would begin, "well it seems to me that". Here there was a pause, call it pregnant if you will but it really did call for laughter. Elizabeth would look up through the smoke at the ceiling in reflective silence. We were being held ransom by the end of the Empire.

Then there was that other moment, perhaps on the same afternoon, when I broke out in speech, quite against my instructions to behave as a facilitator of the group. One member had made the point that *Insight* was, chapter by chapter, like a ladder. He was quite happy to climb up the first eighteen

⁴All told, the Florida Conference yielded six volumes of papers. Only two of these were eventually published by Gill and MacMillan, Dublin and London, edited by P.McShane, *Foundations of Theology and Language, Truth and Meaning*.

⁵Since my anecdote does not seem to give Anscombe much credit, I must state that she was a very sharp lady. I recall enlightening moments with her when we talked of Aquinas. But, of course, anecdotes of her eccentricity abounded. After one of her lectures an American graduate student approached her and remarked, "Miss Anscombe, I didn't understand one word you said". Anscombe's response, "Oh: what word was that?".

rungs, but then he had to halt. I heard myself say immediately, “the trouble with you Adolf (his name was not Adolf, but he is still alive, so..) is that you didn’t make it onto the first rung”.

“Satire laughs *at*, humor laughs *with*. Satire would depict the counter positions in their current concrete features, and by that serene act of objectification it would hurry them to their destiny of bringing about their own reversal”.⁶ Might you share a laugh with me now, even if I am deadly serious? I ended one of my little books with a relevant sentence: “Lonergan is now ten years dead: we could do him honor by burying Lonerganism and moving in dreadfilled detailed seriousness towards the inner foothills of positional and positional being in a concrete concern with the luminous flow of consciousness”.⁷ It was the end of the book, but there was the Appendix, “Caring for Colored Wholes: Operation WHALE”. A key element of that Appendix was the drawing of attention to the need to connect **World Hunger And Lonergan’s Economics**. {Got It?!} I am convinced that there are people trapped in Lonergan studies who would be better off blossoming in some other zone of care. A major difficulty, of course, is that some of these people come with genuine deep questions, heart-quests, and end up - sadly, even at the hands of Lonergan scholars - wading through shabby answers inherited from a truncated European tradition. No wonder some, like Candace Pert,⁸ look towards the East, towards the arts, towards some form of the Far Side. But I do now wish here to turn to a discussion of the cunning required to survive the serial killers of culture and education. We desperately need simply to laugh at this funny little fifty-year-old movement that surrounds - now isn’t that a good word! - Lonergan’s writings. And John Candy said: “Square the Wagons!”

Back then to Florida. What I found conspicuous about that gathering of about 100 scholars was the absence of scientists. It was the typical gathering of a culture of literacy who, perhaps, would claim that understanding the electron or the elephant was both above them and beneath them. Or, God

⁶*Insight*, 626[649].

⁷*A Brief History of Tongue. From Big Bang to Colored Wholes*, Axial Press, 1998, 158.

⁸Candace Pert’s search was the topic of *Cantower IV*. We are re-cycling the problem here and in the final section of the previous *Cantower*.

help us, some would claim that they understood the elephant quite well,⁹ and physics was best left to the physicists. Indeed, the unarticulated view was perhaps more far-reaching: science could be left to the scientists because, after all, we have the deep insights. I am recalling now two conversations. One was in Oxfordshire, pacing towards a tree with a Scottish thinker who said to me - I kid you not - that he had the advantage of knowing the essence of the tree through his philosophical reflections. I didn't bother to ask him what he thought the botanists were doing. The other conversation was with Cantwell-Smith, who was refreshing articulate about the analytic tradition of philosophy: they made a science of the study of language, he remarked, but were rather weak on both sciences and languages. Then, of course, there were the existentialists: but that is a whole other story about a warped view of science that was combated in the early *Cantowers*. Besides, I am being distracted from the main joke, the main sad joke.

Loneragan enthusiasts are attracted by a Great Sommboddy within the Omniboss who cherished understanding above all else. One might forgive the analytic tradition and the existentialists - who are they following anyway? One can forgive the Florida crowd; most had no allegiance to Lonergan but were brought for Big Names' sake. But what excuse have the followers of Lonergan?

I really cannot see how they - or is it you? - can talk their way out of this. The suggested objective is to "understand what it is to understand." The data of the inquiry is understanding: don't you need samples, the best samples available if you are serious? Now you may claim that you are serious but not talented or simply the unfortunate result of a non-scientific education. (Chesterton might go to town on that: is a non-scientific education an education in not understanding?) Then your trade lies elsewhere; or, if you have had the fortune to get hold of the soft job of university teaching, try to be serious about not serially killing the next generation.

Loneragan gatherings after Florida have not changed the tone of literary and informed discussion, and in this they are no different from other gatherings. I recall, at my one and only venture to the massive gather of the American Academy of Religion, attending a meeting on philosophy of science. It quickly became hilariously apparent to me that there was no participant who could have stood up to

⁹We shall face that claim head-on, heart-on, in *Cantower XXIII* "Redoubt Describing".

talk serious science for Andy Warhol's fifteen minutes. On the concluding evening Pannenberg, a nice and modest man, lectured a packed hall on religion and science: I slipped away to see *Last Tango in Paris*. A much saner evening.

But I keep stalling on the fine point of the joke.

There once was a man who fought his lonely way, through an accumulation of the best what-answers of his time, towards the meaning of the meaning of **is? is! is**. The climb shifted him right out the European tradition on the matter, one that had failed to find its way out of a middling muddle.¹⁰ By the time he died there was a great crowd around him: were they claiming to have absorbed his massive shift? I am not talking about the shift of view contained in the perspective on emergent probability, or relativity, or genetic method, or botany, or hermeneutics, or the Triune God, or the twisted exigence¹¹ for all-absorption that is the human organism. I am talking simply about the focal view on **is? is! is**. By what miracle of communication had a view that escaped Aristotle and Plotinus and Augustine and the sincerest of twentieth century searchings become the common holding of a community of not uncommon talent? Are we not at the fine point of the joke?

The view on **is**, of course, is not essential for wholesome living. Most of my readers are probably familiar with a favorite story of mine about a conference lecture in which we were told about Jesus' being at home in intellectual conversion: the problem was, Were his disciples thus converted at any stage (perhaps after Pentecost)? In the evening I suggested to Lonergan that Jesus did not spend the forty days in the desert reading *Insight*. His retort: "Exactly"; and he went on to talk magnificently about the meaning of life, about Dante and Beatrice. "That's what life's all about: saying Hello". There is no problem in being quite lost regarding the deep issue of truth: the problem is mouthing the position

¹⁰2500 years of philosophy wander around some vague position between sensible experience and some type of what-answer. Lonergan makes explicit Aquinas' concern for is-questioning.

¹¹One could make a beginning on this topic from, the index of *Phenomenology and Logic*, under *Exigence*.

or gathering solemnly in positional pretense, Gorgeously.¹² That is the sick joke.

Of course there is the broader joke. There is the solidly established sense of community that excludes the very theoretic conversion that is at the heart of Lonergan's invitation to foundational authenticity. Its absence is cloaked by the semblance of scholarly differentiations. We have gathered round a great composer, and most of us can scarcely carry a tune.

But let say that we have succeeded in carrying a modest tune. Where do we carry it? After fifty years of Lonergan enthusiasm I see no great shift in global culture. What I see is a small beige clique, a micro-Catholicism, holding onto some deposit of truth, sometimes attempting dialogue with larger philosophic and theological cultures. To little effect. For a community claiming to have a historical sense it should not be hard to see that Lonerganism resembles Aristotelianism or Thomism, but seems to have even less promise of success or salvation. And it certainly does not have the unity of efficiency to be expected of cosmopolis.¹³ Again, we are back to the objectivity of humor: what fallout do our gatherings have, or our journalings, or our little in-house theses? Have we not become a pathetic little sect, too hapless to satirize?

But perhaps we are fortunately near death, like the scholarly lady in the play and film *Wit*. Might it be the death of your scholarship? I think not: you may still bluff your way to tenure or whatever, while warning off and on the next generation in kindly fashion. "We are discussing life and death, and not in the abstract either. And I cannot conceive of any other tone. Now is not the time for verbal thought-play. Nothing could be worse than a detailed scholarly analysis of erudition, interpretation, complication. Now is the time for, dare I say it, kindness."

There is the kindness of personal serene acts of objectification regarding our alliance with the

¹²I am recalling here the Platonic Dialogue, *Gorgias*.

¹³ I regularly raise the issue of the unity and beauty of philosophy, of cosmopolis, indeed of your own life as a potentially integral beauty within that unity and beauty.

moral evil¹⁴ of these modern times of un leisured cumulative deterioration and scholarly *hubris*, grounding a repentant reversal. “Such repentance does not stop short at the limited viewpoint of our chapter on ethics”¹⁵, but becomes a *Journey into Joy*, a fresh beginning in which “the millstone has become a star”¹⁶, in which “the antecedent willingness of hope has to advance from a generic reinforcement of the pure desire to an adapted and specialized auxiliary God’s concept and choice”¹⁷ manifested in the fragmentations of modern minding as a possibility of the word made fresh.

*Wait a moment, professor Mac-
Hugh said, raising two quiet claws.
We mustn’t be led away by words,
by sounds of words.*¹⁸

11.2 Dialectic Width

*O Poldy, Poldy, you are a poor
stick in the mud! Go and see life.
See the wide world.*¹⁹

And the specialized auxiliary manifests itself as a contemplative anti-foundational leisured foundation that leaves behind philosophy in favor of humdrum “philosophies of”. And a further

¹⁴The context here is the 25th place of *Insight* 19.9 meshed with the 13th, 14th, 15th and 31st places of *Insight* 20, respiring within some glimpse of the shaky sapling of history that occupied us in the final section of *Cantower X*.

¹⁵ *Insight*, 700[722].

¹⁶See Brendan Kennelly, *Journey into Joy*, Selected Prose edited by Ake Persson, Bloodaxe Books, 1994. Kennelly is quoting Kavanagh’s “Prelude” in an essay on Sean O’Casey.

¹⁷*Insight*, 726[748].

¹⁸James Joyce, *Ulysses*, (1986), 109.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 359.

humdrum is added in a humble functionality that became the character of serious successful scientific work in the past century. The global hodic way is the way to and of the second time of the temporal subject.²⁰ It offers quite new fresh differentiated micro-autonomous meaning to the slogan of the Club of Rome, “think globally, act locally”.

There is no point in my repeating here even a listing of my illustrations of fragmentation in cultural areas. That fragmentation occupied me in the late sixties, when I noted it in the zone of musicology and, most recently, I have attended to it in the worlds of film-making and mountaineering. But certainly that fragmentation is an invitation to dialectic widening, something I have dealt with to some degree already, especially in *Cantower V* and *Cantower VII*. But dealing with it efficiently is another matter. As Beckett’s character remarked, “the air is full of our cries. But habit is a great deadender”.²¹ Indeed, what is the efficiency of my flow of words here? I have raised a few clauses, but have I led you somewhere in resoluteness? More on that in the final sections. My comic flight was hardly complex, concerned as it was, like Beckett, with “the usual”, a topic of the conclusion of chapter 4 of *Lack in the Beingstalk*. The pointing was not hidden, like Beckett’s. “One scholar remarked to Beckett himself that in his English version of *Godot* he makes his heroes speak as if they had Ph.Ds. ‘How do you know they hadn’t?’ the author replied.”²²

Well I, as hero, am surely not speaking here like as if I had a Ph.D., which I don’t. But probably you, my heroine or hero, are trapped in that task: then I can only give the advice that Lonergan gave to me when I was in trouble in Oxford: “give the fellow what he wants: its only a union card”. I managed to get the D.Phil.

Part of the message lurking in the first section was that Lonerganism fits in quite well in the usual academic goings-on, although I went further in suggesting that its standards are not as high and mighty as those in other areas. Yesterday, on one of those rare ventures out of my country retreat - the nearest

²⁰Lonergan, *De Deo Trino. Pars Systematica*, Gregorian Press, Rome, 1964, 199.

²¹*Waiting for Godot*, New York, 1954, 58.

²²Erich Segal, *The Death of Comedy*, Harvard University Press, 2001, 448. The quotation is from the final essay on Beckett, titled, “The Death of Comedy”.

University is 100 miles away and I don't drive - I took time over a library's holdings on **Thinking, Reasoning, Problem solving**. Very heavy stuff, way heavier and more learned than Lonergan studies material, especially where it pulled in either computer-wisdom or technological-gizmery or biochemistry. Earlier *Cantowers* drew attention to such things, and our problem of getting into such heavy consideration. Like, noticing that *phantasm* is being studied seriously by a range of sciences under other names.²³

But I do not wish here to pursue that direction of reform in Lonergan studies. I wish rather to note simpler strategies of dialogue and encouragement and "cajoling".

I suppose that some of the strategies already implicitly introduced are really pretty elementary, in that they don't involve you or I doing any work: we simply encourage, cajole, (force?)²⁴ others to notice aspects of their own pursuits. Later we can view more troublesome difficulties, but in the simple sense it is not so simple. The core problem is truncated subjectivity. "The truncated subject does not know that there is anything there to know".²⁵ The truncated subject is neither dishonest nor insincere in his or her search. Piaget was a very committed searcher after the meaning of children but one must be serious in taking account of his early disorientation. Kurt Goedel was closed off from his own childhood nickname, Herr Warum. The wonder of Candace Pert's wonder consistently escapes her. My own experience of this problem has been that the circumstances of the cajoling have to be psychically favorable: the mood is just right, relaxed, non-academic, and then truncatedness can break down with a laugh. "I really do ask questions, don't I?" "Heavens. I just noticed myself nodding Yes!" Especially have I found it difficult with the seriously learned, that brings to mind Lonergan's advice, "never try to teach your professor anything", which probably comes from his experience with logic during the late 1920s at London University.

However, there is the possibility and probability of non-specialized cultural shifts towards

²³The phantasm has conjugates on four levels of science.

²⁴*Insight*, 398[423].

²⁵"The Subject", *A Second Collection*, 73.

making subjectivity a self-tasting topic: such a non-specialized shift, for instance, is seeded by the slogan, “When teaching children geometry one is teaching children children”. Instead of geometry there can be some other zone; instead of children there can be adults, even seniors. But that slogan has been aired sufficiently already.

There are possible various other non-specialized shifts, and one in particular fits into our present reflections. It is the possible shift in semi-learned writing or discourse that can shift from sympathetic comparison to neglected common grounds. So, for instance, in the field of linguistics there are at present specializations round what are called *wh*-zones: questions are discussed, but with that curious truncated objectivity. Can one turn, cunningly, attention to the root linguistic universals? So, John Hawkes begins his book on language universals thus: “Why do languages share the universal principles that they do? The purpose of this volume is to address such questions”.²⁶ The volume sole index entry under Q is ‘quantifier scope’. Can one get John relaxed enough, perhaps with a Scotch or three, to break the ground barrier? And there is the associated barrier of certainty: /so, perhaps *questioning* is an epiphenomenon or a just a name for neural activities: but would it not be worth systematizing the phenomena anyway? And there is that related barrier regarding the phenomenon of *knowing*: schools of philosophy chase after certainty of knowing without identifying the chased, the beast called ‘knowing’. Like a safari hunting for the oogaga.

The point is pretty obvious, even if you are not a character from Beckett. And related points could be made about other topics, other approaches, The final two chapters of *Pastkeynes Pastmodern Economics: a Fresh Pragmatism* ramble through various transformable situations. So, rather than ramble further here I return to the first sentence of this section which speaks of the shift to humdrum ‘philosophy of ‘ and which brings us to the more troublesome difficulties mentioned above.

There is need a book on the related strategies here; might you be in a position to write it? It relates to a dialectic widening that would stop encouraging pure philosophies move to favor topics in disciplinary methodology. I am here just giving a simpler aspect of points made in *Cantower VII*:

²⁶John A. Hawkes, *Explaining Language Universals*, Blackwells, Oxford, 1988.

“Slopes: An Encounter”. If you wish to lift the statistics of success in promoting de-truncation, then you must enter the particular area of interest, not in some vague inter-disciplinary fashion, but in a definite disciplinary fashion. One illustration that happens to be to hand is a recent book on film: *100 years of European Film*.²⁷ The first sentence of the seven page Introduction raises the question, “What is the Cinema for?”, and it moves the book into its central topic which is ideology in film. Now a philosopher, and I am thinking here particular of the Lonergan tradition, might jump in here and claim that what ideology is is clear, and there is unfortunately a quotable quote from Lonergan on the matter which we should pause over as paradigmatic of the problem and the challenge of this section.

“The term, alienation, is used in many different ways. But on the present analysis the basic form of alienation is man’s disregard of the transcendental precepts, Be attentive, Be intelligent, Be reasonable, Be responsible. Again, the basic form of ideology is a doctrine that justifies such alienation. From these basic forms, all others can be derived”.²⁸

This quotation is multiply dangerous, but I do not want to get into complex questions of the context of Lonergan’s writings about the matter. Suffice it to say that he was sweeping forward in *Method in Theology* here on topics which he was forced to treat speedily and briefly in concluding *Insight* against the clock in 1953. Skipping that complex issue, I draw attention to two problems lurking in the quotation. First, the meaning of the word “derived”. We are back at the fuller version of my slogan above, “when teaching ...”, which in the present case might be turned to the zone of teaching film-making: try that. But the fuller version I am thinking of is Lonergan’s later definition of generalized empirical method. Since it is the heart of the matter here and in the next section it is as well to quote it once again for you. “Generalized empirical method operates on a combination of both the data of sense and the data of consciousness: it does not treat of objects without taking into account the corresponding operations of the subject; it does not treat of the subject’s operations without taking into account the

²⁷Diana Holmes and Alison Smith, Manchester University Press and St.Martin’s Press, New York, 2000.

²⁸*Method in Theology*, 55.

corresponding objects”.²⁹

So, if you want to talk about the operations of film-making intelligently, you do it in the style of the new culture by being competent both in the film-making business and being competent in operations-talk: AND the competencies are a matter of mutual mediation.

In this section I have been stressing strategies whereby the film-maker or whatever is nudged towards appreciating what he or she is at. You may note that I am just adding a context to the reflections of *Cantower IV*. There we witnessed Candace Pert being nudged by her own life towards asking what she was at. We were led to reflect on the **Tomoga** principle that conflicts with contemporary narrowness: “Theoretical understanding seeks to solve problems, to erect syntheses, to embrace the universe in a single view.”³⁰ What I am doing here, apart from reminding you of the general principle, is illustrating the challenge that may well be meeting you, as a philosopher interested in Lonergan’s pointings, in your own social and cultural context. So, in this particular case, you invite the film-maker gently to notice the operations. What I am slipping in is the nudge to you not to be a know-all when you may well be a know-nothing. Film making has become, in a century, a highly sophisticated mesh of talent and technology: if you wish to talk operations, first listen and learn. That is what the words “can be derived” means within generalized empirical method, when one is detecting ideologies in a sequence of film traditions, as the aforementioned book does.

You recall that I mentioned two problem with the quotation, the first having to do with the word “derived”. The second problem allows me to end this section with a touch of humour, or is it satire, about a particular type of Lonergan following. I met a chap in Toronto a few years ago who was pleased to tell me that he had used my diagrams - they are in *Wealth of Self and Wealth of Nations*, pp. 15 and 48, but a better version is in Appendix A of *Phenomenology and Logic*. In his thesis he had in fact an amalgamated version of the two diagrams, one that left out the what-to-do level. It fitted in quite well with Lonergan’s list as given in the quotation above. Was Lonergan wrong, then? Here, I cannot resist sharing with you an odd connection that I spontaneously make (odd connections are a

²⁹*A Third Collection*, 141.

³⁰*Insight*, 417[442].

ground of humour and comedy). St. Ignatius, in his famous *Exercises*, puts in as the first post-resurrection of Christ his appearing to his mother. There is, Ignatius notes, no scripture to back this up. But he goes on to quote Scripture: “Adhuc et vos sine intellectu estis?” (my 1948 copy is in Latin). “Are you also without understanding?”

Just because Lonergan dodges regularly the modal distinction that is connected with the operation of planning doesn't mean that he denies it. It amuses me and amazes me and distresses me to hear that litany of Lonergan's recited with the omission of a key transcendental. And try leaving it when you discuss film-making, acting, etc: Be attentive, Be intelligent, Be reasonable, BE ADVENTUROUS, Be responsible. Planning and projecting are what its all about.

I think immediately of possible learned debates and papers: “how many transcendentals are there it can be tied in nicely with that debate about levels of consciousness!

*After our Epilogue this crowd dismisses
I'm thinking how this play'll be pulled to pieces
But pray consider, e'er you doom its fall,
How hard a thing twould be to please you all³¹*

11.3 Dialectic Withness

*In a true piece of Wit all things must be,
Yet all things there agree,
As in the ark, joined without force or strife,
All creatures dwelt: all creatures that had life;
Or as the primitive forms of all
(If we compare great things with small)
Which without discord or confusion lie
In that strange mirror of the Deity³²*

³¹William Congreve, *The Way of the World*, Act 5, Epilogue.

³²Abraham Cowley, *Ode to Wit*, 1668.

The previous section expressed practical concern about the shift from object to subject, or better the shift to include subject, in the new culture. It doesn't seem a huge leap - "better to know what you're doing whatever you're doing" - but our truncated technological culture warps the question into a matter of know-how. This section turns the concern around, though the concern has already been expressed in my comments on "derived" and in our amusement about the Scottish intellectual who knew trees through metaphysics. Might we extend that amusement a little here, with more than a little discomfort? The question of interest here is, the reach of philosophy and theology. A Massive literature exists on the topic: here we continue our light-hearted ramble.

During the first week of my meeting Lonergan, the Dublin week which saw the origin of the diagrams mentioned in the previous section, we had dinner with a couple of Irish Catholic Intellectuals, indeed Clerics from the Department of Philosophy of University College, where the six lectures were being given. In conversation, Lonergan was always more interested in jokes than in joustings, but one of the clerics, perhaps to raise the tone of conversation, proposed the question, If there was a foot-ruler alone in outer space, would it be a foot-ruler. In the next *Cantower* you will get an impression of Lonergan's cutting-edge perspective on foot-rulers, but here he swiftly cut off the topic with the remark, "I don't deal in possibilities". So, we swept past the fourteenth century. But later there was question of the sixteenth century, and of theology after the Reformation. Lonergan's comment on professors in the post-Reformation isolationist set-up: "They were just big frogs in little ponds".

So, what of pure philosophy and pure theology? My view is by now pretty evident, in a commonsense way: I would note that it cannot be evident in a differentiated way to undifferentiated consciousness, and this certainly annoys undifferentiated consciousnesses. I respect Descartes and Pascal for their magnificent mathematics, but I must agree with Lonergan about "Descartes, Pascal and their commonsense contribution to our self-knowledge." Further, there are two chapters in *Insight* where Lonergan regularly insists that common sense is outside its competence when talking about common sense. Nor does common sense seriously increase its competence by adding post-systematic or post-scientific meaning: a few books on Freud or Jung or Parsons or Keynes only seemingly get you

into the ballpark. The trouble with the areas represented by these names, of course, is that the scientific quality of the work is in doubt. I did not mention Maxwell or Boltzman or Heisenberg or Dirac. Even a giant appetite for pop-physics, encouraged by the illusions of some physicists, does not qualify one to handle or mouth serious physics. The trouble with the higher sciences is that description is our native air and mouthing is rampant. One of my regular jokes in the 1970s was about Konrad Lorentz getting a Nobel prize at that time for discovering that zoology was about animals. In spite of Lorentz, zoology is not in good health,³³ and all that human studies adds to zoology is a complexity of truncated descriptions of what it regularly does not recognize as the data of consciousness. Yet another gross joke of our times laced into the oneness of history.

*Siddhartha listened. He was now listening intently, completely absorbed ... taking in everything ... and all the voices, all the goals, all the yearnings, all the sorrows, all the pleasures, all the good and evil, all of them together was the world. All of them together was the stream of events, the music of life.*³⁴

11.4 Dialectic Witness

*Let my lamp at midnight hour
Be seen in some high lonely tower
Where I might oft outwatch the Bear,
With thrice-great Hermes, or unsphere,
The spirit of Plato to unfold
With words or what vast regions hold*

³³A context here is “Zoology and the Future of Philosophy”, chapter 3 of McShane, *The Shaping of the Foundations*.

³⁴Hermann Hesse, *Siddhartha*, Trans by Hilda Rosner, Peter Owen, London, 1971, 150.

The immortal mind that hath forsook

*Her mansion in this fleshly nook*³⁵

Most of the short sections of *Method in Theology* are favorites of mine. Two provide a context for this deliberately short section, which is simply an invitation: “Incarnate Meaning”³⁶ and “Meaning and Ontology.”³⁷ It is a matter of asking, What sort of a “character” am I? What has been my luck and my formation and where now do I stand?

I am not asking you to publish the results, although the suggestion will occur in the next *Cantower*, in section 12.xx.. Your Lutheran ‘here I stand’ might be before a mirror. And the issue is taking a stand, indeed the stand invited by Lonergan in that “scientific moment”³⁸ of page 250 of *Method in Theology*. The stand should be minimally a belief stand, although this is a tricky question. Presumably the question has been coming up regularly: are you driven towards the search for the Dark Tower; are you reaching for the poise of proto possession? Perhaps above all I am interested in your sensa theory, your feel for, or presence in , the world of serious understanding. The equations of thermodynamics make no one feel warmer, but they get us towards the essence of heat, they lift us towards the essential. Are you conversant with any systematization that is not merely post-scientific or pre-scientific? I am speaking about a displacement to theory that is unmistakable: it is not just ease with Kohlberg’s ordering of child development or Evans Pritchard’s organization of kinship relations. Lonergan continually appealed to physics so what should I not? It is the simplest, most developed and successful science, though at present its maturity is questionable. Does dQ/T mean anything to you, or functions that are powers of e : $e^{f(x)}$? Then, sweat as you may, you have no significant understanding of

³⁵John Milton, *Il Penseroso*, 85-92.

³⁶*Method in Theology*, 73.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 356.

³⁸I introduced this expression, borrowing from Habermas, in section 6 of *Cantower IX*.

heat. Perhaps, as I regularly recommend to those who are honestly serious in accepting Lonergan's invitation to life and democracy, you are battling into economic theory? Then do you by now make any sense of the equation $da' = a'(dq'/q' - dQ'/Q')$?³⁹ In the future democratic world the meaning of this equation will be a common intellectual culture, the sense of it's pulse⁴⁰ a commonsense presence. Do I hear you object? You are busy working on Lonergan's view of this or that, (in comfortable dis-theory). But do you not think, nonetheless, that it would be worth 4 of your 40 years of intellectual "life" to move into Lonergan's world and the real world? When I get you to look at it like that, is the situation not hilarious, ridiculous, pathetic?

Anyway, you see what I invite: pull out *Method in Theology* and check yourself down the list of pages 286-7. If you are really grooving, tell yourself what you think of the first and second words of metaphysics. But finally, you must think your think and say your say about functional specialization: do you have any anticipation of it as a radically new set of differentiations of consciousness? Perhaps I can conclude here with a nice little test for you that meshes these differentiations with theoretic differentiation. The word "doctrine" occurs in all specialties. Can you detect and speak about its nine generic meanings (I include the extra-Tower commonsense genus)? In particular, what precisely distinguishes the meaning as one moves up from foundations to doctrines and on to Pragmatics and to Executive Refection? What is the ex-plaining movement that takes it to commonsense meaning? Now there's a decent meta-doctrinal question about which it is not polite to ask. "Doctrines that are embarrassing are not mentioned in polite company."

"Proofless, purposeless laughter can dissolve honoured pretense", and in this sad no-laughing-matter, laughter at the pretender in the mirror is a start.

³⁹*For a New Political Economy*, 303.

⁴⁰In the conclusion to the Index preface of *For a New Political Economy* I wrote: "The prior challenge is to come to grips with the subtleties of the ideal pulsing, so that not only economists and leaders, but also general culture, might come to say with Wordsworth, 'And now I see with eye serene / the very pulse of the machine'" (*Ibid*, 326).

*Ye living lamps, by whose dear light
 The nightingale does sit so late,
 And study all the summer night
 Her matchless songs does meditate,
 Ye glow-worms, whose officious flame
 To wandering mowers slows the way,
 That in the night have lost their aim,
 And after foolish fires do stray.⁴¹*

11.5 Witless Dialectic

*....the composition shows a group
 of beggars leading
 each other diagonally downward
 across the canvas
 from one side
 to stumble finally into a bog
 the faces are raised
 as towards the light
 there is no detail extraneous
 to the composition one
 follows the other stick in
 hand triumphant to disaster⁴²*

⁴¹Andrew Marvel, *The Mower to the Glow-Worm*.

⁴²William Carlos Williams, extract from "The Parable of the Blind", *Selected Poems*, with an Introduction by Randall Jarrell, Beacon Pres, 1969, 162-3.

You may have wondered here and there in this section why the title of this *Cantower* is “Lonergan. Interpretation and History”. But no: you figured it out: I wanted to draw attention to the problem of reading, interpreting, Lonergan’s effort in various ways, and to merge that problem both with the reflective problem in areas of culture other than theology and philosophy, and with the problem of pure philosophy and isolated theology. Right on! The next *Cantower* will illustrate the problem further by taking one definite illustration of the problem: reading Lonergan on Space-time, picking up the cultural context, pointing towards the fuller heuristic that is quite beyond pure philosophy and isolated theology, and returning (12.5) to the question of Witless Dialectic in a rambling manner. The next *Cantower* has its heavy side, the bridge to foundational self-possession that is crossed by grappling successfully with the oddities of our dispersedness, but you have to make up your mind where you stand with regard to that struggle. Meantime, it is best to view the three *Cantowers (XI, XII, XIII)* as a relaxed amused humble recognition of the massive beyond-us-ness of the task of interpretation: interpreting authors, interpreting the cosmos, interpreting the future, interpreting ourselves.

And here the only point I wish to make is that there is certainly need for an honest laugh about the fact that Lonergan studies dodges Lonergan’s identification of dialectic in an altogether unsubtle manner. What could be plainer than his description of the “The Structure” of Dialectic?⁴³ Or has it been my doubtful genius that led me to read that section the way that I do? Well, at least Terry Tekippe half-way agrees with me⁴⁴: the missing half is what I dealt with in the previous section: Terry didn’t get there, but then who has got there? Quentin Quesnell picked a promising title for his paper at the conference on *Lonergan’s Hermeneutics. Its Development and Application*: “Mutual Misunderstanding: The Dialectic of Contemporary Hermeneutics”. But the paper has nothing to do with Lonergan’s structure. Nor does Sean McEvenue’s paper, even though he writes of Lonergan’s contribution in terms of an

⁴³*Method in Theology*, 249- 250.

⁴⁴ Terry Tekippe’s work on p. 250 of *Method* is discussed in *Cantower VIII*, section 5.

interpersonal challenge⁴⁵ One can say, of course, that Quentin and Sean were doing their own thing, as were most of the others at the conference. But then, it does turn the volume title into a joke, doesn't it? Perhaps it is time that people got on with doing their own thing rather than generating an illusion that we are serious about this son of a surveyor from Quebec?

We are back then at the problem of honesty or pretense with which we ended that last section. But now we have pinned the issue down to a single page. If you are learnedly into dialectic and you are outside that page in the structure of your effort then you are not seriously within Lonerganism. So, Lonerganism shrinks, possibly disappears. Wow, what a relief! But, you say, 'I am not interested in such-and-such aspect of Lonergan. I want to mesh his suggestions about the dynamics of consciousness with whatever.' Excellent: I am all for particular interests, and I would like to see his suggestions about the dynamics of consciousness meshed in with kindergarten books and books in particular subjects for all the school grades. This certainly would not be witless dialectic, but it would be the concrete extra-Tower activity of setting up a concrete dialectic of good and bad teaching resources. Why has nothing like this happened in the past fifty years?⁴⁶ Still, there are many other illustrations of good commonsense dialectic in therapeutic and pastoral attitudes. The need is, to distinguish this from serious interpretation of Lonergan: a deal of good work does not need the back-up of a functional specialty called *Communications* or *Executive Reflection*. It just need a first year course in Lonergan, or even a serious self-reading of that first light-weight chapter of *Method in Theology*.

But I feel it necessary to note that there is a deal of work that requires more. Again, a little humour wont hurt. The story is told of Elizabeth Anscombe's husband, Peter Geach, walking out of the Jesuit Church in Oxford half way through a sermon. Nor is intellectually and existentially muddled preaching a Jesuit preserve: Blackfriars, in my experience, could be just as deadly. The point is that "Lonergan's God" is not just a high-flown intellectual exercise: it is a necessary possession and

⁴⁵"Theological Doctrines and the Old Testament: Lonergan's Contribution", *Lonergan's Hermeneutics*, 139.

⁴⁶I note welcome signs of a beginning in John Benton, "Teaching Linguistic Universals" and Terrance Quinn "The Calculus Campaign", both published in the Website *Journal of Macrodynamic Analysis*, Volume 2, 2003, edited by Michael Shute.

possessedness if one is to be adult in one's providence and one's preaching and one's counseling. I am raising the question here of massively inadequate theological education, another zone of witless dialectic cultivated by what I call serial killers. Why do professors of theology assume that they have to drag their students through all the garbage about God that is around in the culture. Perhaps they themselves have not sorted through the garbage coherently? I have been told of so-self-designated teachers of Lonergan's theology spending a /semester on Trinitarian theology puttering through problematic views without ever getting to the rich personal point of Aquinas "Hypothesis of Intelligible Emanations in God".⁴⁷

Possibly the most seriously witless dialectic is done by those who do not notice the set of discontinuities that separate Lonergan from contemporary philosophies and theologies. Which, of course, is paradoxical: if Lonergan is not serious discontinuous, why the fuss? If Lonergan is seriously discontinuous, why compare apples and oranges, truncated subjectivity, "the disorientation of contemporary experience, its inability to know itself and its resources,"⁴⁸ with its precise critical denial? But we will get back to these problems gradually, starting with the ramble of section 12.5 in the next *Cantower*.

⁴⁷The title is of an article I wrote on the topic in first-year theology: see *Theological Studies* 1962. The fun side of the publication is worth recalling. Courtney-Murray, editor at the time, had read a version of my "The Contemporary Thomism of Bernard Lonergan" (*Philosophic Studies*, Ireland, 1962), and suggested that I do a one-article presentation of the Verbum Articles. I complied. Fred Crowe, amused by the event, remarked that Murray would never have considered the article for publication had he known I was a first year student and not a professor. When I came to my fourth year of theology where the tract on the Trinity was the topic the Rector of the house of studies decided that he had better, for the tranquility of the professor, export me to Heythrop. There I continued my theological misery, but there was the bright side of having the delightful Peter Leavy (Professor of Poetry at Oxford just before Seamus Heaney) as Ad Grad "preparation mate" for the Spring months. He was much more poet than pedant, and just couldn't take the stuff seriously! I also got to meet Lewis Watt, Lonergan's lead into the problems of Capitalism, and found the Blandyke papers of the young Lonergan. And perhaps my best comment on the worth of theology is that I spent most of that year writing "Insight and the Strategy of Biology". So much for the Queen.

⁴⁸Lonergan, "The Dehellenization of Dogma", *A Second Collection*, 30. On truncated subjectivity see the same volume, 73-77.

*A little learning is a dangerous thing;
 Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring.
 There shallow Droughts intoxicate the brain,
 And drinking largely sobers us again.
 Fired at first sight at what the Muse imparts,
 In fearless youth we tempt the heights of arts,
 While from the bounded level of our mind
 Short views we take, nor see the lengths behind⁴⁹*

11.6 Dialectic Within

A native health and innocence
 Within my bones did grow,
 And while my God did all his glories show,
 I felt a vigor in my sense
 That was all Spirit. I within did flow
 With seas of life like wine;
 I nothing in the world did know
 But 'twas divine⁵⁰

I have puzzled long over where to treat the particular topic I have in mind here. It will strike you as strange, I hope, even if you have reached the Poission, but not if Protopopssession has become your native tone. THEN you are strangely at home WITHIN.

I introduced the problem long since, but most recently emphasized it in *Lack in the Beingstalk*, the problem of the human organism self-reading. The jump-off text has haunted me for over forty years: “study of the organism begins...” and I have nudged you towards it in almost every *Cantower*.

⁴⁹Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism*, 215-222.

⁵⁰Thomas Traherne (1637-1674), *Wonder*. 17-25.

Sometimes I invite audiences to envisage themselves pacing the woods with a prime-mate or a dog, equalized by nakedness. There is the disadvantage of you both having that odd sensibility called sight: perhaps we should take a lead from Joyce: “shut your eyes and see.”⁵¹ Or perhaps, as I do now myself, it is better to image the journey with a sea-mate that is see-less, or even underground, wormwise. The point is to get at the joke and the wonder of a wonderskin - organism “condemned to solitary confinement within its own skin”, to use a phrase of Tennessee Williams, and the geohistory of such organisms. You and your primate negotiate the habitat through an extraordinary panoply. But you are not confined to the habitat as you pace; you are Panurge, with an odd pansophic poise that bears a laugh, that bears laughing about.

Perhaps you may be helped into my mad non-vision by my recalling watching the World Cup final last year - and Wimbledon indeed the next week - with this curious wondering glee. Even for a naive realist, the talent involved in the dialectic is thrilling. But if you can “take it in” (literally) in position, then it becomes outrageously thrilling in its impossibility. Twenty two blind organisms, with a few ‘external’ controllers, zip around the habitat Pantagruetically focused on a free-floating sphere! “So it comes about that the extroverted subject visualizing extensions and experiencing durations” (the clock ticks away at the corner of the screen) and visualizing other extroverted subjects visualizing other subjects “really out there”, can think of the twenty-odd subjects, and “affirm beings differentiated by certain conjugate potencies, forms, and acts grounding certain laws and frequencies”, like the grounded estimate of ball-possession flashed up occasionally. And extroverted Brazilians leap for joy and German organisms slump into other rhythms. Isn’t the humorganism an impossibly strange and funny invention, a prodigal organism to be somehow fully invented? “Man is the most improbable of creatures” is a remark of Lonergan from an unpublished tape, surely spoken with some such horizon as this? And in that invention in the world invisible, Here Comes Everyone, equally invited, offered a name-inscribed stone.⁵²

⁵¹James Joyce, *Ulysses*, 1986, 31.

⁵²*Revelations*, 2:17.

My non-Christian Japanese daughter-in-law, Ako, watched the World Cup with me, played in her native city. “*When the autumn wind blows / Eyeless Komachi wails in pain. / But where is her lovely face / In this wilderness of susuki?*”⁵³ I do not wail but wonder at her unseen lovely face, her delicate hand. “The eye, strangely, is not the hand”⁵⁴ or face, a hidden seen from being. The organisms that are she and I and the unseen players are somehow Tanizaki’s wailing stone, exigencies, “*opens a trill / Annotaste of Throat*”⁵⁵ And in that exigence each is infinitely alone except for the objective of that wailing and that exigence that is “not an object”.⁵⁶ And I wonder, in this strange inescapable realism, at Roman smallness and Xavier rushing round the world with water, and the small mean god invented to replace or suppress the exigence, and the parallel small world of Lonergan that shrinks the dark at the heart of Lonergan, and I laugh at the sadness of it all.

*But perhaps you wont believe me
either. Unless of course (if I may be
pardoned for suggesting it) you
happen to belong to my own species*⁵⁷

⁵³From “The Bridge of Dreams” by Junichiro Tanizaki. *Seven Japanese Tales*, Berkeley Medalion Books, New York, 1963, 88. I cannot resist quoting a few lines that follow the poem, merging as they do with the mood. “I have seen an old painting which shows *susuki* growing out of the eye sockets of what is presumably Komachi’s skull; and in the Komachi Temple there was a ‘wailing stone’ on which was carved the poem I have quoted. In my childhood the whole area was a lonely waste covered with a rank growth of *susuki* grass”.

⁵⁴B. Lonergan, “Cognitional Structure”, *Collection*, 215

⁵⁵The conclusion of the poem that begins and ends *Cantower II*: “Sunflowers Speak to us of Growth”.

⁵⁶*Method in Theology*, 342.

⁵⁷Junichiro Tanizaki, “The Thief”, conclusion, *Seven Japanese Tales*, 122.