

FuSe 7

The End of Lonerganism: Fuse or Refuse

“Even the weariest river,
winds somewhere safe to sea.”¹

Lonerganism is a weary movement. Can it be brought safely to sea, to see?
Might it wind round to “doing a big thing”² about the *acquis*?

“You can have teamwork insofar, first of all, as the fact of reciprocal dependence is understood and appreciated. Not only is that understanding required; one has to be familiar with what is called the *acquis*, what has been settled, what no one has any doubt of in the present time. You’re doing a big thing when you can upset that, but you have to know where things stand at the present time, what has already been achieved, to be able to see what is new in its novelty as a consequence.”³

We are now winding round, not down but up, in the first of twenty five seminars on functional collaboration. The group in this seminar have pushed, or been pushed, to conceive freshly, indeed fantastically, of “Functional Research”. Those who participated actively have made two attempts at doing a bit of functional research: the third and final attempt involves an effort not only to lift the previous attempts to greater refinement, but also to do a shabby version of taking a position in the style of *Method in Theology*, p. 250. Instead of the great *Assembly*⁴ of that task - to be considered in the fourth seminar in late 2011 - there is just whatever little we each have accumulated of

¹Swinburne, *The Garden of Proserpine*, lines 87-88.

²I quote the text to follow.

³*CWL* 22, p. 462, from a 1968 essay.

⁴The last word on page 249 of *Method in Theology* is *assembly*, the first of a sequence of dialectic tasks.

wisdom in these six weeks, the *assembly* of our puttering together against our diverse backgrounds.

I had, at foolish moments, envisaged this essay as giving larger leads - the function of the “in-between” FuSes⁵ - but as I struggled with the problem of a relevant strategy my view of what I would do oscillated madly. I would certainly take a position and somehow point to its operation. At its maddest, perhaps, was the taking of that position by bringing together the works of two great twentieth century thinkers, Richard Feynman and Bernard Lonergan.⁶ That particular madness revealed itself as an anticipation of the fourth seminar, and indeed many of the other daft points were reaching too far ahead in the 25 seminars. So, after much rambling with what we 54 collaborators had done, I came back to the issue of the minimalism of, as I said, a shabby personal positioning.

That shabbiness relates to the meaning of *acquis* in the quotation from Lonergan at the beginning. After that quotation I talked about winding up, not down. UP from what and UP towards what?

So I come to two meanings of *acquis*, or in my usual terms, to two meanings of *Standard Model*. And I thus arrive at a simple positioning question I would pose to each of us regards my two suggested meanings.

The first meaning of *acquis* is of a present generally-accepted standard model, “what has been settled, what no one has any doubt of in the present time”. This you can

⁵This is easily noticed from the present seminar’s imaging in the *FuSe* series: there are the Attempts dealt with in *FuSes* 4, 6, and 8. There are the essay that give leads: *Fuses* 3, 5, 7, 9. The strategy will carry forward, in a condensed form, through the other 24 seminars.

⁶My eventual decision in this matter was to bring these two together in the first of the *FuSe* essays that deals with dialectic. Functional Dialectic is the topic of the fourth seminar of this series, at the end of 2012. The essay in question is *FuSe* 16. The topic will in fact be the more modest enterprise of assembling, winding together, the creativities of Feynman and Lonergan. It is to be an enlargement of the claim made in the 10th chapter of the biography, noted at the end of this note, regarding the dominant *acquis* of Lonergan’s career. Pierrot Lambert and Philip McShane, *Bernard Lonergan : His Life and Leading Ideas*, Axial Publishing, 2010.

take to mean two things. There is the current state of culture, including the culture of philosophy and theology. Within this *acquis* there is the culture of Lonergan studies. It runs parallel with the broader culture of *acquis* in two senses. First, it is of the same disposition with regard to descriptive and commonsense discussion of fundamental issues. Secondly, it has shown very few signs of intertwining seriously with, much less influencing, that other broader tradition, “doing a big thing when you can upset that.”⁷

The second meaning of *acquis* is “what has been settled by Lonergan, and of which he had no doubt.”⁸

My position is that there is a massive existential gap⁹ between the concrete meaning, the ongoing story, of the first meaning of *acquis*, and the story of the second meaning, which is - or should I say was? - the story of Lonergan.

What is your position on this, on the two meanings of *acquis*? And here you will have noticed that I am now talking beyond interpretation into history, and so leaning forward towards the next two seminars, indeed beyond them into the shabby version of dialectic that we are staggeringly capable of as we wind down - or up - at the end of this seminar. You have a third attempt at a few pages on functional research: your position should effect that attempt, make luminous sentence by sentence - but shabbily, beginners’ style - a positional commitment. In that sense you should be - but the awkward question posed below is, are you? - up to the task that Lonergan gives the historian: to be “at pains not to conceal his [or her] tracks but to lay all his cards on the table”.¹⁰

We come, in that context, to the two - or more - meanings of my title. The end - the *finis qui* if you like - of Lonerganism, that weary river, can be a twining round to the

⁷See the text at note 3 above.

⁸*Ibid.*, modifying the text.

⁹See *Phenomenology and Logic*, the index under *Existential Gap*.

¹⁰*Method in Theology*, 193.

sea, a see, a seize, of self and being, and a blossoming of functional collaboration. But it can also be an end, so to speak, in itself, a snake winding round to eat its own tail, tale. Hopefully, we can twist the meaning of the end and the tale, so that Lonerganism does not go on and on like Aristotelianism and Thomism, but twist to see and seize.

There can be a concerted effort to **fuse** into a single global explanation which *de facto* is to be fundamentally eschatological. Or there can be a **refuse**, and that in both senses of the word.

Fuse is a word that I picked up from the end of one of Lonergan's great incomprehensible paragraphs: "elements in the explanatory differentiation of the protean notion of being **fuse** into a single explanation,"¹¹ a single standard model, a single *acquis*.¹² That word led me think of a title that would replace *Lonerganism* - something Lonergan did not want - the title *Fusionism*. As you know from the previous *FuSe 6*, and its lift of our perspective on the story of "Common Sense As Object", the suggestion *Fusionism* is replaced by the seemingly-comic, *Lobbyism*. Lobbyism is to be a strange hugging of The Field¹³ by a community that is destined to grow to 250,000,000 members, global¹⁴ careers of humanity's climb through perhaps endless millennia.

But now our interest is not in Lonerganism's twists and turns, or the longer cycle of incline that is to bring forth, lobby-lifted, a resonant facticity of Jeremiah's "heart law"¹⁵ but in your turns and twists.

¹¹*Insight*, 610, lines 8-9.

¹²In the second seminar series, 9 - 16, focused on Christianity, there is the larger view of the *acquis* that would add the fuller view of explanation as the Second Trinitarian Person, the *finis qui* that is an ever-distant standard model, even for the mind of the Incarnate Standard Model.

¹³See *Phenomenology and Logic*, the index under *Field*.

¹⁴Not my creation: the word has been round for some time, meshing *local* and *global*.

¹⁵*Jeremiah 31 : 33*. The role and roll of lobbyists is to "set up signposts, raise landmarks, mark the road well" (*Ibid*, 31 : 21). Role? One may think of the display of terms that includes

It is not expected to be a mighty venture, so, nothing like what is the formal task of dialectic as described on page 250 of *Method in Theology*. “What position do I find myself in as I move towards the end of this seminar?” But note the subtlety of the “find myself”, a subtlety wound into *FuSe 6*’s pointing to self-as-self, subject-as-subject, a potential lobbyist of a new culture in the long story of Common Sense as Object.

Yes in this Third Attempt we do not and cannot expect great subtlety: just some effort to answer my question, “what is my *acquis*?” That French word seems untranslatable, and certainly it loses a range of resonances when I say, What is my **standard model**? Perhaps my **standing model** rings a better bell? There I am, at the end of the modeling runway, turning, quite exposed and revealing to those who can read the walk, the poise. “Can I, might I dare, read my poise?”

Most of us find that a difficult and embarrassing task, and I think of Lonergan’s crisp comment, “doctrines that are embarrassing will not be mentioned in polite company.”¹⁶ Recall also, heart-close, Lonergan’s other relevant comment on the “series of zones from the ego or *moi intime* to the outer rind of the persona one keeps some matters entirely to oneself and refuses to face others.”¹⁷ “Fuse or refuse”, but now it is not Lonerganism but, perhaps, **one** - you or I - in **one’s** desperate need or daft ambition that automatically and scotomatically drives **one** to *fare lo stupido* in a special sense.¹⁸ What is my *acquis*, my character?¹⁹ my operative view of understanding? Am I possibly

role on *Method in Theology*, 48. Roll? Recall the chapter title and slogan, “A rolling stone gathers *nomos*”: the gathering is be effective as Lonergan’s envisaged Cosmopolis requires.

¹⁶*Method in Theology*, 299.

¹⁷*Insight*, 495.

¹⁸This sentence has a complex of references: *Insight* chapters 6, 15, and 18; *Phenomenology and Logic* on *fare lo stupido*, but also on *Existential Gap*. *Automatically* is a mechanist word, of course: are we trapped in general bias within our erudition?

¹⁹*Acquis* has a relevant biological meaning, **acquired characteristics**, but I am, of course, thinking now of **character** as in *Method in Theology*, 356.

caught in a “no man’s land between the world of theory and the world of common sense”?²⁰

You may think me too explicit, too close to the bone, in these last paragraphs and their footnotes, even if, in our simple seminar-positioning, we may not go the embarrassing distance required of dialectic specialists. But I would have you muse over the dynamics of cycling, and the “cumulative and progressive results”²¹ of that cycling. We return to that in the conclusion, Here the issue is facing the questions: for which *acquis* do you opt? Or might it help to pose the question as, To which *acquis* does your present *acquis* invite you?

I would note that it is not a matter of failure if you opt for what we might call the safety of convention, the accepted ethos. And, indeed, in that safety you might even become a lobbyist for Lobbyism. But, consequent to that, there is the challenge of dissociating yourself from the climb of the Tower, and the company of functional recycling. This ceases to be your ball-park. Nothing surprising in such a move. On the analogy of science, most graduates in physics do not get into the Tower of physics.

Opting for a reach for the *acquis* of Lonergan is quite another matter. “It is not easy.”²² It may be something of an impossible dream, especially in a culture of Lonergan studies that simply or subtly dodges the challenge. You may find yourself in the rhythms of Samuel Beckett’s program: “No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.”

²⁰*CWL*, 6, 121. Each of these quotes and notes, of course, pose the same embarrassing question. Perhaps it can be best existentially digested in facing a poise over one’s education and interests. Many of those interested in Lonergan have “never been bitten by theory” (*ibid.*, 155) and have been left by a faulty education marvelously competent and articulate in going round in scholarly circles with e.g. just no serious idea within the simplest of sciences, physics. Nor does remembering such symbols as d^2s/dt^2 or ds/dt signify seriousness: “if you do not understand what those symbols mean, you do not understand acceleration and velocity.” (*Topics in Education*, 145).

²¹*Method in Theology*, 4, 5.

²²*Insight*, 266. I keep returning to this pointer regarding Cosmopolis, or now, Lobbyism: have we not found it true of this climb of ours, into its beginning?

Still, even your presence in such a trying is a stand for “theoretical understanding”²³ and its embrace of the universe, the modern zone of Aristotle’s excellence²⁴ and of Ortega y Gasset’s hopes.²⁵ You will have stepped aside from those who “urge one to modesty”²⁶ in pushing existentially²⁷ the view that some among us can climb up the 9 or 10 cliffs to the *acquis*, so that more than “one can

²³*Insight*, 442.

²⁴Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, X, 7, 1177b 26 - 1178a 2. See Lonergan’s comments on the text in “Mission and Spirit,” *A Third Collection*, 33. The challenge is to “strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us” (1177b 34), but think that the future lobbyist of the present vision is reaching gently and suavely and successfully to global human nerves.

²⁵It is worthwhile to read a substantial piece of his great text here, with modifications: “The need to create sound syntheses and systematization of knowledge, **to be nudged forward by Lobbyism**, will call out a kind of scientific genius which hitherto has existed only as an aberration: the genius for integration. Of necessity this means specialization, as all creative effort inevitably does, but this time the man will be specialized in the construction of a whole. The momentum which impels investigation to dissociate indefinitely onto particular problems, the pulverisation of research, makes necessary a compensative control - as in any healthy organism - which is to be furnished by a force puling in the opposite direction, constraining centrifugal science in a wholesome organization.(J.Ortega y Gasset, *Mission of the University*, translated with an Introduction by Howard Lee Nostrand, Princeton University Press, 1944, 91). The **bold-faced** words replace the following bold-faced words in the original: “... knowledge, **to be taught in the ‘Faculty of Culture’**, will call out ...” One may ask where Lobbyism is to be taught: for us, a later and larger issue.

²⁶*Insight*, 442: the entire paragraph, which describes a subtle stand against theory, is worth brooding over in this context.

²⁷There is the challenge of going against the *ethos* described in the paragraph mentioned in the previous note. But I would draw attention to the problem of teaching Lonergan’s views and perspective correctly. The needed shift is not easy, given the lack of competence [see above, notes 6 and 20) of the generations of Lonergan scholars that are burdened with introducing his stuff to later generations. We have to acknowledge this incompetence, a fault of our previous education, and encourage the next generation to face modernity and post-modernity with courage and patience. See *Method in Theology*, 350-51 on that task.

go on"²⁸ and join the lobby for complete effective explanation.²⁹

There is a great deal more to be said, especially in these days of decadence, regarding the positioning I talk about, but I shall simply make two broad points in closing: I do not want to complexify overmuch our present task.

First, in the paragraph at note 9 above I wrote of my position, my *acquis*, my mindset.³⁰ But my mindset - and yours - is a genetic reality, and indeed, in the distant future mindset will be recognized as an accelerating reality of adult growth.³¹ For you, in the present question, this adds a dimension worth thinking about and including: the shifting of your mindset that calls for narrative expression.

Secondly, think ahead optimistically to the millennia when the *acquis*, the mindset, of the functional collaborators will have the maturity and stability of present physics.³² The full global culture of Lobbyism will be one of a Bell-curve movement of "cumulative and progressive results." When I say "think ahead" I mean, of course, the thinking of serious schedules of probability regarding Lobbyism, serious and difficult

²⁸I point, as I do regularly, to that discomfoting central paragraph in the centre of page 287 of *Method in Theology*.

²⁹The effective intertwining of Lonergan's two canons of explanation is to be central to the 2nd and 3rd seminars.

³⁰It is very difficult to find a resonant translation. Of course there is the German word, *Weltanschauung*, or the odd word, *Praxisweltanschauung*. Both of which I have used before. Might we use the word *Perspective* from *Method*, but in a fullsome positive sense that ties in with Lobbyism? Other languages may have more to offer.

³¹A large topic, introduced in the last pages of my *Lack in the Beingstalk*, Axial Publishing, 2007. See the text below at note 34, where Proust refers to growth in a limited zone.

³²This is a complex issue, needing much lengthier treatment. Physics has a relative maturity, and will shape up considerably through its discovery of functional collaboration (see McShane, "Elevating *Insight*. Space-Time as Paradigm Problem," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 19 (2001) 203-229) . Theology, where Lonergan's discovery had its origin, is at present confused and descriptive, hiding its failure under complex comparative work. It is very difficult to envisage the later structure of explanatory collaboration, when present apparently serious problems will have slid into the ashes of the Flat Earth society.

fantasy. “It is not easy”³³ to rise to a fantasy of a later humanity, inside and surrounding the Tower of Care, smiling at those strange axial days, at that strange axial daze: “did people really think, back then, that the figment of their imagination was the real world?” “Did we really go through a period of humanity’s pilgrimage when elder’s scarcely existed, when the old were ‘not old folk but young people of eighteen, very much faded’³⁴?”

At that stage, Lobbyism, in its self-critical balance, will have an integral spectrum of legitimations.³⁵ “Legitimation is manifold. It occurs in any of the many differentiations of consciousness.”³⁶ At its vortex heart there will be the core mindset of the impossible dream of global authenticity. Various shots at this have emerged, religious and secular, “but if the legitimation of authority lies in its authenticity, none of these solutions is adequate.”³⁷

What solution is adequate? A solution that rolls on critically and self-critically in an ever-self-freshening cherishing of the “rock on which one can build.”³⁸ In the rest of that paragraph Lonergan, once more but with larger mindset, “repeats the precise

³³See note 22 above.

³⁴Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Times Past*, Random House, New York, Vol. 2, 1042.

³⁵It is worthwhile to muse over Lobbyism now in the context of the “business” (*Insight*, 265) and the “properties” (*Ibid.*, 266) of cosmopolis. The musing needs to reach out stumblingly to contemporary movements that are pale shadows of what is needed. Otherwise it is just commonsense pipe-dreaming. For instance, there is a legitimate, though limited, lobbying for funding emergent from the recent push of MIT for “The Third Revolution: The Convergence of the Life Sciences, Physical Sciences, and Engineering” (A Report of January 2011). The Convergence could be swirled into the vortex of Lobbyism, if that movement were in business.

³⁶Lonergan, “The Dialectic of Authority”, *A Third Collection*, 11.

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸*Method in Theology*, 19. Note the pointing of footnote 8 there. The rock in its fullness is the topic of seminars 9 - 25.

character of the rock.”³⁹ As I do, tiresomely perhaps for adults who don’t grow into knowing that a re-reading needs to be a fresh reading. I replace the rock with a stone and fancy the rolling of the stone in a global self-correcting whirl, circumincession, so that endlessly, in pilgrimage and eschaton, “a rolling stone gathers *nomos*.”

³⁹*Ibid.*