

FuSe 17 A: Risking Positioning, Praxipositioning

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Introduction

Section 1 gives some preliminary broad contextualizations. Section 2 points each of us and all towards relevant Praxipositioning. Section 3 identifies this FuSe 17 A – a strange cousin of section 3 of *Insight 17* – as a crisis zone of the lie of Lonergan studies of this past half-century. Section 4 enlarges on the crisis, in some way “indicating the view that would result from developing what he has regarded as positions and reversing what he has regarded as counter-positions.” (*Method*, 250, lines 26-28), He? Lonergan? The title there, to be the title of **FuSe 18**, nudges us with humour and satire in that direction: “Alarming Lonerganism’s Lying-In-State”.

Section 1: Preliminaries

It seems just as well for me to repeat the preamble that went out separately to those starting the seminar in dialectic. So, I begin by quoting that preamble:

“The fourth seminar, on Dialectic, begins on October 5th and continues till December 20th. The third seminar, most of you would agree, was a killer: Functional History does not exist, and even when I put the emphasis on the “easier task” of functional autobiography, not too many rose to the challenge. **FuSe 14**, which is actually a series of 5 essays, presents some efforts at functional history. Mine, A, contextualizes, then B [Brown], C [Henman], D [Shute] and E [Quinn] get down to the job, and then there is **FuSe 15**, where I present my own functional pointing to what I call the *Grand Canyon* in chapter 17 of *Insight: An Existential Gap* between the 2nd and 3rd paragraphs of p. 586.

I can spread the meaning of *Grand Canyon* to all of section 3 of *Insight 17* and note that what makes our progress difficult is that that section is quite beyond our present Lonergan community. And that underlies the problem of functional history; but it was there haunting the efforts we made at functional interpretation.

It haunts the present challenge, and the haunting is focused in the meaning, for Lonergan, of the word *Comparison* on page 250 of *Method*. What should we do? Give up?

.... Better to carry on, yet somehow sidestep the problem. Somehow? Well, by focusing our efforts on the second half of that page 250, by **having a shot at taking and expressing a personal stand** on things positional but, perhaps, especially on the need for both a fuller *acquis* and functional collaboration. My **FuSe 17A**, in early October, will elaborate on this, but begin now by thinking quietly and seriously of something of fundamental importance to you, something perhaps that emerged from the first three seminars.

[Not all will wish to sidestep the problem of the Grand Canyon, and for those there is the possibility of a subgroup of us talking around, struggling with, the meaning of the word *Comparison*: its relation to the second canon of hermeneutics, its presupposition of a grip on genetic method. I am open to that collaboration: check with me.]

Taking a shot at expressing? Some of us will prefer to do that privately: a less embarrassing business. But there are the risk-takers, who would be like Luther and enter the arena with a "Here I stand". Talk with me about this dangerous self-exposure. Perhaps, in the end, we might have a shared **FuSe 17**, as we had a shared **FuSe 14**? Indeed, I would hope that our exchanges and efforts would turn out to be a shabby start on doing the twists and turns of the second half of page 250 of *Method*. But more on that in FuSe 17A.

P.S. I encourage you to encourage others to join our venture. As Brown pointed out quite eloquently [**FuSe 14 B**] it is quite strange that the Lonergan school has unblushingly dodged this brilliant page 250 of *Method*. Is it, perhaps, because it asks for dangerous self-exposure?!"

I wrote in that preamble of a shared effort, of producing together something like the five members did in **FuSe 14**, which was subdivided into five essays by five authors. In **FuSe 17** I would like us to move somewhat more complexly towards "doing the twists and turns of the second half of page 250 of *Method*." So, I am thinking of us paying attention to lines 20 to 33 of that page, and especially in having some shot at both "the further objectification" [line 24] and the "final objectification" [line 28].

But some of you may have other contributions in mind. Above I mentioned those crazy enough, like myself, to tackle the meaning of *Comparison*, but that is not the issue here. The issue is the way you, personally, wish to [1] take a likely position, [2] do the further objectification, and [3] get involved in the final objectification.

Some of you, as again I suggested above, may want to do all this sorting out of your fundamental convictions privately. Good: my only suggestion then is that you confide in someone discreet rather than musing in solitude. I am thinking here of Lonergan chatting about dialogue as different from dialectic (I have a memory of that from *Philosophy of God and Theology*) or about Gibson Winter and company: “see what emerges when you start applying them, eh?”¹ A friendly dialogue is a first application.

So now I am talking to those who wish to express fundamental convictions in **FuSe 17**. I intend to list contributions alphabetically, but not as in **FuSe 14**: here the second name will lead you to a contribution. So, for example, Zanardi will be a piece of **FuSe 17 Z**. **FuSe 17 A** is, of course, the present effort of myself: but to **FuSe 17 A I** intend to add those with names beginning with A. I had thought of another class of entry in a **FuSe AA**: an essay where the anonymous would have their say. But I drop the idea for the moment: those who wish to speak anonymously - because they are vulnerable as thesis-writers or job-seekers - can be given an unnamed voice in **FuSe 17 A**. Still, others may prefer a definite **FuSe 17 AA**. We will see. We could start a sobering club: Antilonerganists Anonymous.

Finally, my title: I leave you to figure out that Positioning and Praxispositioning are in fact the same inner word **bent forward, leaning**, whether we are considering finite or infinite persons. But of course, that is a Praxisposition, one that turns W3 into a prayer.²

¹ See *A Second Collection*, the interview from Florida that I edited, p.217.

² W3 is that central Metaword that has been reproduced often (see **Prehumous 2** on the Website, or page 161 of *Bernard Lonergan: His Life and Leading Ideas*, or indeed section 3 of **Cantower 17**: obviously related to my efforts here regarding *Insight 17.3*.) The prayer that it becomes blossoms, through slow ingestion, into a powerful mantra, one indeed that ties that central Metaword to the central chapter of Paul’s *Epistle to the Romans*: Romans 8. “**Double You Three, Everlastingly**”. It seems appropriate to note here that while these first 8 seminars focus on the general categories, I am being realistic regarding my present audience as predominantly a Christian group. The Mantra that I propose here, a Tower Person’s condensed articulate chemistry of attitude, is central to the

Section 2. Praxispositioning

These next three sections are just short nudges towards you doing your own thing according to the appeal of section 1: fermenting out your proposed positionings.

I do not think that general musings on religious, moral, intellectual, theoretic, aesthetic orientations are of much benefit to us at this stage in our functional stumbling. Indeed, continuity with our efforts so far requires that we pick up on our meager findings, and take stands on those findings. I could list such findings of seminar 1, 2, and 3 here, but it seems best to invite you to go hunting through the **FuSes** and the **BLOG** in the context of your own searchings, and to thus notice anomalies of research, interpretation and history relevant to you. But you have the list of research topics suggested, the seven appendices of **FuSe 11** and **Fuse12** that drew attention to failed interpretations within Lonergan studies, the pointers regarding history in **FuSe 14**. Above all, think of the problem of the *acquis*, the standard model, the up-to-date viewpoint: in this, of course, you have to take a stand on what I call *theoretic conversion*. That stand is not necessarily one of being scientifically educated, but one of admitting Lonergan's clear pointing regarding "pseudometaphysical mythmaking."³ The admission should be meshed with, followed by, a resolute leaning and doing: one tries to rise to serious understanding in some area, or one struggles to withdraw from pseudo-science in one's speaking. AND one encourages others towards the same poise.

beginnings of seminar 9.

My mention of *The Epistle to the Romans* brings to mind a previous effort of mine to point to the complexities of handling explanatorily that work and the various commentaries upon it. See, on the Website, the book, *Redress of Poise* (1992): chapter 2, "Ecological Justice", deals with the topic. For those that I mentioned, crazy enough to get into the explanatory meaning of *Comparison*, I quote a single footnote (17) from that essay, where I comment on the task of getting Paul's meaning of God's Care, Z_i , into an explanatory context: "*Insight*, pp. 587-88[609-10] This involves the long and difficult task of moving from basic control of the elements of meaning to refined self-appropriation of varieties of description, of metagrammar, of strategies of metaphysical equivalence, etc. One may then approach such a question as What Z_i means by writing of how X cares for Y. Then there is the shift to correlating the views of... Z_{i-1} , Z_i , Z_{i+1} ,.... When X is a transcendent being (God or angel) one is on trickier ground. So one places Paul's discussion Z_i , of God's care for man in a new heuristic context, and one might expect "the diligent authors of highly specialized monographs to be somewhat bewildered and dismayed when they find that instead of singly following the bent of their genius, their aptitudes, and their acquired skills, they are to collaborate in the light of common but abstruse principles and to have their individual results checked by general requirements that envisage simultaneously the totality of results". (*Insight*, p.581[604]) Initially we must fall back on the humble pre-Linnean criticism and self-criticism of the first principle of criticism (*Insight*, p.588[611])³*Insight*, 528. In the containing paragraph of this phrase, and the paragraph to follow, there is a brutally clear identification of the lie of Lonerganism.

But **speaking** is the topic of the next section.

At all events, you see that I am asking you to be pragmatic about details of positioning that we have stumbled around during these first seminars. And indeed, you will notice that most of these stumblings have been around the need for serious understanding, for a personally luminous stand against the long-term general bias which holds Lonergan's pointings hostage.

Section 3: Direct, Directing, and Directed Speech

I wrote in the Introduction of a crisis zone to be dealt with here, or rather named as a project-focus. The title helps that focusing of our interest on that crisis as a crisis of speaking. It also gives a hint of complexity. The simple crisis that I draw attention to immediately here is the crisis noted so neatly by Lonergan in his Creative Page of February 1965: the shift from "hearing" to "saying." But that crisis is not simple when faced existentially by you and me and the Lonergan disciples. And that existential facing occurs, *per se*, in the second half of page 250 of *Method*. There each of us in Dialectic is invited – cajoled, forced? – to say, to speak, to be and seek to do, the **where** we stand, leaning forward.

We should not slide over this simple necessity of Tower-membership. It leaves us, so to speak, naked in our addressing the future. There is no verbal footnoting: above all there is no Lonergan or Lonerganism. **I speak to the future in my own name.** The speaking is within the *acquis* of the previous cycle, but especially within present additions of interpreted anomalies lifted into pragmatic possibilities of the future. Those pragmatic possibilities always included anomalies of failure of past cycles: even in its maturity of, say, 9011 A.D., success is accepted to be only *ut in pluribus* – Bell-curved, in modern terms. Enough said on that: cumulative and progressive cyclic success has been a topic already in the **FuSes**. And indeed, so have both directed and directing speech. So let's leave further musing on these till we have each blossomed out into some poises that we have now reached, even if we do not as yet have them as an **Epilodge**, a refined

launching site for global progress.⁴

But I would have us blossom, paradoxically, into a discomforting realism about starting poises. I mention fruits of past cycles, but we are in the position of having no cycles. So, bluntly, our direct speech is pretty empty of directives. The point can be put in various ways, all marvelously helpful in alarming Lonerganism. The forward specialties are pretty empty zones. The emptiness is even back there at the beginning, In Lonergan's tired book, *Method in Theology*. What does he emphasize in those last three chapters of *Method*? Well, we now have useful leads for doing the history of doctrines.⁵ We surely know that concepts need grounding insights.⁶ We are nudged, by an emphasis on integrated studies, to be more "ready to sacrifice immediate advantage for the enormously greater good of society in two or three decades."⁷

But what of Policies of Progress that would ground new effective genetic fantasies of "Systematics, Communications, Actual Contexts"⁸ in these next millennia?

Section 4: Alarming Lonerganism's Lying-In-State

The main fruit I envisage of our efforts in **FuSe 17** is that they be a source of alarm to ourselves and to Lonergan students. I will pick up on, and try to integrate, those seminar efforts, in **FuSe 18**, which is to have the same title as that of this section.

Alarm? The word has many relevant senses, pointing to wake-up calls and calls about invasion. The one I find most attractive here is the meaning of *alarm* in fencing:

⁴"Epilogue" is the title of Cantower 21. You may suspect, from such correlations as *Insight 17* with **Cantower 17** in note 2, that **Cantower 21** is related to the Epilogue of *Insight*, a sort of 21st chapter. This is in fact true of the **Cantowers** from 14 on.

⁵*Method in Theology*, chapter 12, "Doctrines", is in fact a very dense rich chapter, but this is a noteworthy twist in it.

⁶I am recalling the first footnote in the chapter on Systematics in *Method*: "The key issue is whether concepts result from understanding or understanding from concepts". The chapter is pretty minimalist. Think of the massive problem of genetic systematics raised in the fourth last paragraph of the chapter, where Lonergan of Aquinas' systematics of grace: "it can be inserted in larger and richer contexts". But that insertion is a topic slipped over there. It is a topic of Lonergan's *De Intellectu et Methodo*. See **Cantower 7**, "Systematics and General Systems Theory", where there is a central relevant quotation from that work of Lonergan at note 29, in the 1990 translation of Michael G. Shield, "Understanding and Method", 130-1. The quotation in the original is on page 55.

⁷ *Method*, 361.

⁸ The article of this title appeared in the *Lonergan Workshop Volume* of 1987, but it is now available on my website as chapter 7 of *ChriSt in History*.

“a quick stamp on the ground with the advancing foot.” It is a stamp of challenge to someone actually facing you, in the mood or stance of responding. Responding even: now that would be indeed nice!

I do not think that a stamp on the ground is going to be sufficient. We are talking about a massively discomfoting shift out of old ways of commonsense discussions and comparisons and pseudo-dialogues.⁹

There is the strategy of us continuing the 25 seminars and bringing forth the 25 volumes that are to follow them in the JMDA series.¹⁰ These, certainly, are more than a quick stamp on the ground, and may well bring us to 2020 vision. But it would seem good to try some stamp on the ground in these next few months about the needed discomfoting shift, as we head for 2012. It seems, for example, an opportune time to remind people of the 40th anniversary of the appearance of *Method in Theology*.¹¹ There is a great deal of good will and enthusiasm in young people who enter into Lonergan studies, yet the old guard are solidly effective in tuning new generations into old ways. How many conferences of 2012 will focus seriously on that anniversary of *Method*? I suspect: none. Might you rock the boat a little, stamp a lead toe?

I propose, therefore, the “crucial experiment”¹² of making what we are about in these seminars “a topic.”¹³ The character of the making is up to you, to each of us in our

⁹These are complex issues that I hope to deal with more fully in **FuSe 18**. But don't you find it a bit of a giggle to hear someone reading a paper in dialogue with Jones, which Jones will not read {Jones, of course, may be a dead German!}. The paper may well rise to the further heights of a dialogue of Jones and Lonergan: then one wonders what part in the chat the presenter has, where the chat is leading us all. But let me add the deeper shock that comes from getting a grip on the explanatory demands of **Comparison** (*Method*, 250) and the shift from common sense. Turn back to the final paragraph of note 9 above, on *Romans*, and muse over Paul's meaning and a 21st meaning of God flooding our hearts (*Romans*, 5:5). Is there not also a related flooding of the amygdala? I am thinking here of contemporary work on neurolinguistic feedback in amygdalic re-orientation when placed in the context of Lonergan trinitarian 4-hypothesis as it is focused on a trinitarian chemistry of history. Muse, now, I suggest, on the dynamic significance of the Mantra introduced, in note 3 above, that sublates – but that is a precise genetic business - *Romans* 8 into the zone of Tower spirituality: “Double You Three, Everlastingly”.

¹⁰The volumes of the *Journal of Macrodynamics Analysis* will lag behind the seminars by something less than a year.

¹¹As I write this appeal for action and for change, my mind is very much on the 70th anniversary of the appearance of *For A New Political Economy*, and what Lonergan's identification of the grossly simply error underpinning present destructive messings of governments, banks, IMF, World Bank, etc. could do in these years. In the notes below I bubble forth to say more. Are my ramblings not a fresh appeal, to those even slightly tuned to Lonergan's “two circuit” view, to form a solid articulate front, a pale image of the missing 8th functional specialty?

¹² *Method in Theology*, 253.

¹³ *Ibid.*

own little corner.¹⁴ Some – those doing theses or seeking jobs, promotion, tenure – had best be silent. Still, even those might try out a bit of pseudo-naïve curiosity on their teachers: “What is this crazy guy McShane doing?” “What are these people doing in those seminars?”

I am tired of the key issue being ignored. Lonergan **did** make some progress in the dozen years after *Insight*: he fantasized up a unified global science for future millennia. I was naïve in thinking that my alarm during of the Florida Conference –noting the need for functional collaboration in musicology – would stir interest if not enthusiasm.¹⁵ What stirred after Florida was a nominalist interest in the descriptive pointers of the early chapters of *Method*. What emerged was a “jellyfish amporphism”¹⁶ instead of shock in the discovery that the “the old game is done for.”¹⁷ Can the Lonergan movement “begin anew without bitterness”?¹⁸ I doubt it. But let us see what stirs in these last days of 2011. If past decades are an indication, nothing shall stir in our Lonergan Centers, but perhaps some bolder spirits in them will – please, pretty please! – have a shot at explaining how wrong we are in this seminar venture. Surely, surely, they cannot continue in their silence?

I mentioned at the beginning of this section that I would integrate, in **FuSe 18**,

¹⁴ See note 11 above. A volume of *Divyadaan. Journal of Philosophy and Education*, that of August 2010 (vol. 21, no. 2), was devoted to commonsense outreach in the area of economics. The title is “Do You Want A Sane Global Economy?”, and it contains 8 intertwined articles. The title of the final article, by myself, is what I implicitly refer to in the text above, “The Global Economy and My Little Corner”. The volume can be had, for a mere \$10, by contacting robertpen.sdb@gmail.com

¹⁵The Florida paper, “Metamusic and Self-Meaning” appeared later as chapter 2 of *The Shaping of the Foundations* (1976), now available on the Website.

¹⁶ *For A New Political Economy*, 21.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.* There is an obvious shift here from stuff regarding the massive but simple flaws in present economic theory and practice, to the massive but simple flaws in present Lonergan studies and practices. Of course, the two sets of flaws intertwine, and it seems to me that both zones could best be lifted by Lonergan people considering themselves to be called to do a shabby version of the eighth specialty. But that is a project I spelled out previously in SGEME [cf. www.sgeme.org]. Still, it is worth the tail-end reminder here that if one of us could find an influential economist or journalist that would take seriously the slogan **There Are Two Types of Firm**, controllers, thus enlightened, of America and Europe could get an effective grip on the financial shambles even before the end of Obama’s first term as President. His only term? Morgan Freeman this week [on the Pierce Morgan show] pointed with refreshing bluntness at the Republican dedication to “get that black man out of the White House”. Freeman does not think they will of course. Ho ho: and am I a sort of black Irishman, President of SGEME [:>], to the republic of Lonerganism?

our efforts of these next months. It is to be an integration that will carry forward from these 100 days, and most likely from their failure to shake the establishment. It will be yet another beginning of the long climb to **Cosmopolis**¹⁹, backed by the talking and the writing of you folks and, hopefully, younger folk who begin to sense the brutally frustrated pragmatic genius of Lonergan.

¹⁹ The context that I recommend for ingesting this entire struggle better is that nudged forward by **Quodlibet 8**, “The Dialectic of My Town, Ma Vlast” and (in the Archives of the website), “Arriving In Cosmopolis”.