

FuSe 17 McS: McShane How Might We Collaborate in 2012?

My first problem is the meaning of *we*. I would hope that it could mean all of us who respect Bernard Lonergan's work. Strategically, however, it seems best to leave that problem to an appendix. Indeed, I am going to have recourse to appendices to simplify my tentative answers to the question posed by the title. I even omit the word *functional* from that title so that my hope might have larger legitimacy. Others besides my seminar colleagues know of my interest in functional collaboration but I would further hope that the broader desire to collaboration would prevail and cut back on controversies and tensions.

One preliminary tension-reducing point I would make before launching into simple suggestions relates to growing pains or starting pains in the following of Lonergan.

Lonergan, as a pragmatic genius, went too far too fast in his solitary climb. Non-Lonergan people are only now being forced to notice his invention of an effective economic science. His philosophy of spacetime is still way ahead of the present struggles in Relativity and Quantum Theory. And these are only two of the context of his solitary shift in viewing theological and philosophical method. I was lucky to come to his work in 1956 after my graduate studies in relativity and quantum electrodynamics, a terrific advantage over those trapped in the patterns of philosophy and theology of the time. That, trappedness, that lag, that "existential gap", became obvious to me from the Florida Conference of 1970, as I struggled to edit the six volumes of papers. It deepened my suspicion of the late 1950s that "this is not going to take." From 1966 on I have struggled with the leads Lonergan gave me, that summer in Toronto, on functional collaboration, and there was the sad experience of his powerful solution to the problem of Cosmopolis being bypassed after the publication of *Method in Theology*. But it was all, in retrospect, altogether likely. Lonergan was extravagantly beyond his time. I think of my own luck, coming with my background to *Insight* chapter 5: nonetheless, it bewildered me, and it continues to do so. I think of my ongoing struggle with the canons of hermeneutics, especially the second. That part of *Insight* – chapter 17, section 3 – is just impossibly far ahead in its brilliant heuristics of explanatory human sciences.

So the fifty+ years messy shrinking of his meaning was pretty inevitable. What, then, might we do to turn a corner towards serious understanding, serious collaboration, the beginnings of a new lift of progress that has, paradoxically, nothing to do with Lonergan and everything to do with a global groaning for a new global culture?

But of course I am convinced that this shift has everything to do with Lonergan, and so I can move to my first suggestion. In 2012 might we not struggle to acknowledge the messy shrinkage?

You and I recognize immediately here a bone of contention: for some there is no shrinkage. Well, let me appeal thus to all: surely no one denies that we are flawed in our understanding and application of Lonergan's work? Each of us, indeed, can say, Well, we could do better here, now, or there, or then? So might each of us fill in the here and now, the there and then, in some

instance, and muse over what might be done about it? Indeed, is that not what FuSe 17 A – Z is, has been, about?

So, should I add now further pointing to the group's concerns, beyond my invitation to them, to us, to reach out with some effectiveness to all those interested in promoting the effectiveness of Lonergan?

With much relief, and after much messing, I answer for myself here and now, "I think not". And what a massive relief that is, on this November day. My sketches and scribbles for this essay had so far begun to look like jottings towards yet another volume on method. So, yes, halt McShane. Why not invite those genuinely interested in advancing Lonergan and advancing sanity to check out on our efforts here, in FuSe 17, and in the previous seminars? And follow that check-up by some **comparison** with what is going on generally in Lonergan studies? Certainly each of us could take our own run at some here and now gap, anomaly, oversight.

But would it not be quite neat if we could, 2012, make *Comparison* a topic, and then conversion to Lonergan's meaning of *Comparison* "a topic" (*Method*, 253)? We could shyly try figuring out the meaning privately, off the record, leaving no tracks rather than "at pains not to conceal his tracks" (*Method*, 193), as the bottom half of *Method* 250 requires.

Well now, there I have found a nice twist, a neat minimalism poised on a single word, a single methodological focus. Why don't we try, in 2012, to find out what Lonergan meant by *Comparison* on page 250 of *Method*? And perhaps there would be some among the non-seminar people willing "to lay all his or her cards on the table" (*Method*, 193). So, yes, I halt with this packaged contribution to our FuSe 17 reach towards positionings.

My selected positioning, therefore: let us have a communal shot at becoming luminous on the meaning of *Comparison*.

And, happily, this brings me back to my positioning about Lonergan on page 1: "Lonergan, as a pragmatic genius, went too far too fast in his solitary climb." How, then, might he fit into *Comparison*, if we leave behind old-style strategies of **comparison**, and take a risky leap into a new science, a subsection of which involves *Comparison*, a strategy that sublates the more elementary considerations of the second and third canons of hermeneutics?

What, then, of my hopes at the beginning here? "Strategically, however, it seems best to leave that problem to an appendix. Indeed, I am going to have recourse to appendices to simplify my tentative answers to the question posed by the title".

It would still be strategically best to add a bundle of appendices. But I do the non-best of just repeating, in conclusion, my appeal of early November to my seminar group. It is my best 80-year-old positioning for 2012. And in that appeal I did already express the hope that "there would be some among the non-seminar people willing 'to lay all his or her cards on the table' (*Method*, 193).

**My Solitary Appendix,
being the notice of early November to the seminar members.**

For me this is an important notice regarding the seminars and the widening of interest in functional collaboration in 2012. **FuSe 21** is a fairly comprehensive conclusion to the seminar on Foundations that we hope to spend time on in January-April: a strange displacement that remains to be explained in **FuSe 17- McShane**. You already have **FuSe 31** on the Website: the Introduction to the 9th seminar [January 2013], which is the beginning of the second cycle, on Christian Theology. **FuSe 18**, pointing broadly to the road towards collaboration, is also available on the Website.

Why these early moves? [Moves to which I also connect my appeal for your contributions to **FuSe 17**, your stand, particularly on the need to face Lonergan's challenge to collaborate.]

Because it is clear to me that we cannot go on like this, dodging the new minding world to which Lonergan invites us: a global science of functionally collaborative care. 2012, 40 years after the publication of *Method in Theology*, is a good year to call for honesty.

I am only one voice in the large Lonergan community, easily ignored. Where am I to pitch my TENT OF OCCUPATION, of protest? On what door should I nail my theses?

Might some of you raise your voices? : generally, in Lonergan-group conversations; and of course in your positionings of **FuSe 17 A – Z**. My own final blunt positional contribution, **FuSe 17 McShane**, is to follow these, on December 1st, and hopes to point forward, with their help, towards initial functional collaboration. But I should mention the ambiguous joy for you of being indiscrete. Pass on incautiously those three **Fuses**, 21, 31, and 18. Pass on this note. Nudge, with a mischievous grin, friend, foe, and the slow.

You may be discomforted, but think of those settling into a cold Montreal winter of Tent Protesting regarding money abuse. What worth protesting regarding minding abuse? What worth signing the road towards **Arriving in Cosmopolis** (a Website Archive essay) in 9011 A.D.? The ambiguous joy for me would be some sort of police action that would ask me publically to take down my Tent: of course your Tents could also be threatened!!!