

FuSe 20 A: McShane A Foundational Focus of Seminars 5-8

Prologue re Membership of the four seminars of 2012.

There is a sense in which this new year's work, on the four forward specialties, offers the chance of a new start, and I am structuring it, as you can see from the short Fuse 20A essay, so that it is comfortably open to new members. New members may simply contact me by e-mail: pmcshane@shaw.ca . There are no obligations, nor even an obligation to continue at any stage. For convenience I divide participants into two groups: group **A**: active participants; group **O**: observers. There is no clear line here: some **O**bservers may find themselves bursting to speak; some **A**ctive people may find themselves silenced by over-commitment elsewhere.

But now I would also like to tidy up the status of previous participants. If you wish to continue simple e-mail me with a "single letter message" re the divisions above: **A** or **O**. No answer means **NA, NO :)**

You will notice that this first seminar of the year, on foundations, is unusually contextualized. **FuSe 19**, the introduction, is already on the Website, as is the final essay, **FuSe 21**. Moreover, active members have the possibility of staying anonymous. But I talk of all that in the body of **FuSe 20 A**.

I shall be always available for conversation, and as we move along there are usual fermentational interchanges of members. I shall begin that exchange at the end of December.

On, then, to our topic:

Tis is the middle essay –rather first of the middle essays, **FuSe X** - of the fifth seminar, on foundations. The format is by now not unfamiliar. The middle essay

of the previous seminars tended to be an expression of our struggles towards some glimpse of what the specialty was to be about. The middle essay has become, then, a series of essays, and the series in Dialectic was from A to Z, where the letters referred to second names of writers. Here the naming is different. The essays A and Z are both to be mine: the letters in between are to be used for participants' contributions in the order in which they are received.

This present essay is peculiar in two ways. First, it comes in the odd context of three essays, two that belong later in our series: **FuSe 21**, strangely, is the end essay of the three on foundations and **FuSe 31** is the first essay of the second cycle of seminars, an essay giving an orientation to the 8 seminars on Christian theology. This odd contextualization was noted already as related to my effort to reach out towards a broader collaboration in this year of the 40th anniversary of the appearance of *Method in Theology*. The third relevant essay, **FuSe 18**, ending the seminar on dialectic, fits in here in that it was a broad pointing to ways of fostering functional collaboration. After seven main points on the topic, it homed in on the problems that lurked behind canons two and three of the canons of hermeneutics.

Now these canons lurk behind the problems of the top half of *Method in Theology* 250. How so? That question leads me to my choice of focus for the 2012 seminars. The focus is caught in a single word, the third word of Lonergan's six italicized words (*Assembly, Completion, Comparison, Reduction, Classification, Selection*) of that page. The single word, *Comparison*, is like an X, an unknown, for the "how so?" question. It is differently unknown to each of us, but I had better not get into that just for the moment. What is immediately important is to catch my simple pointing here, my simple question for you: how are you - seminar people, Lonergan followers - to SAY **comparison** into the future?

For those of you tuned to Lonergan's divisions of labor, the question spreads into five genera of questions, one for each of the forward specialties, and one massively complex genus of street-reach, a topic of rhetoric, a toil of a Galilean

reach: “to what shall I compare?” We have already been introduced to the word **comparison** in recent seminars, Brown’s considerations of Lonergan’s meaning for it in history,¹ and Braio’s lifting of that meaning into the context of dialectic.² We are back at that question of the previous paragraph, “differently known to each of us”, and I could well pause to share enlightening musings about that “differently known” in relation to the unknowing yet knowing Lonergan who wrote the last two sections of *Insight* chapter 7. You might think of the man in his late forties typing the beginning of the third last paragraph of that chapter on “Common Sense as Object”, not yet the man who would speak intensely in his fifty-fourth year of “the problem of general history, which is the real catch.”³

Yes, you might think of that strange decade of Lonergan’s battered life, or of Brown or Braio struggling with Lonergan’s refined compendiously written contextualizing of “Comparison”, “comparison”, “compared” (*Method* 250, lines 6, 15, 30). But, as I remarked, “better not get into that just for the moment.” What then? – or should I say: What now?

Are we not in some sense back at the requirement of the historian “at pains not to conceal his tracks but to lay all his cards on the table”?⁴ Yes, but not back: forward rather, and nudged forward by Lonergan’s writing on “the sufficiency of the foundational reality”⁵ with its intimation of “a fundamental and momentuous change in the human reality.”⁶ Nudged forward to speak, to speak first to oneself, laying one’s solitaire cards on the table, to greet privately, with me and all the others of your ilk, the non-“sufficiency of the foundational reality,” that one is here and now.

¹ See Brown’s **FuSe 14 B**: “Some Notes on the Development of *Method* 250”, the concluding section.

² **FuSe 17 B** is an essay by Frank Braio on that aspect of Positioning.

³ *Topics in Education*, 236.

⁴ *Method in Theology*, 193.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 269. It is the title of the second section of the chapter on Foundations.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 270.

How do you now speak to yourself, with the cosmic chemical groaning of insufficiency haunting your syllabing, the word **comparison**? Look away from this type at the end of this sentence and say it to the four corners of the room and the non-corners of the cosmos: **comparison**. Alert-eared. Tricky goings-on, these.

My request for participants – or indeed anyone interested – is to make the move to speak out your fractionally sufficient foundations, briefly or at length, for the seminar group. It is your direct speech, noteless, no looking back to others. What you write will be inserted as FuSe 20 Bff – Y, not alphabetically, but as the contributions turn up in February 2012. Moreover - an odd strategy this – I would encourage an anonymous contribution, but feel free to make a public thing of it. You may even avoid my knowing by asking someone else to send your view. How this forms a new beginning, almost pre-Lonergan, and how it is to blossom into a post-Lonergan community of 20/20 vision by 2020: that is a question calling for a slow communal climb.