

FuSe 22 The 2012 Crisis of Speaking To the Future.

Preamble:

It seems to me better to leave this essay, with its two sections, as it was completed a week ago, prior to the cancellation of the seminar series. A third section is then added, in accord with the suggestion of that cancellation notice of February 25th 2012. I repeat that notice here:

“Sadly, it seems to me best now to terminate this seminar series. The energy and time is just not there in the majority of the members to pursue the assigned tasks. Even the modest assignment of writing briefly and spontaneously using the word “comparison” produced only a handful of attempts. What then of the giant task of the sixth and seventh seminars, to push for a standard model that would include the full reach of Lonergan’s meaning of *Comparison on Method 250*? This is no way to meet what I called ‘The Crisis of 2012’ - a piece of the title of my final *FuSe* essay, FuSe 22 - the settledness of Lonerganism in its grossly defective and self-destructive meaning of comparison, in its brutal neglect of Lonergan’s appeal for functional collaboration. Enough said. That final *FuSe* essay, appearing on March 1st, is to include a section 3 with some further light on related issues.”

You may well wish now to go directly to that section 3, which takes up the topic of the title in a new fashion. But the project of the seminar on foundations and that of this fifth project remain central to the redemption of Lonergan studies.

Introduction

This essay is the lead-in to the sixth seminar, on Policy and Doctrines. It is a strange mix of topics yet it is altogether in continuity with the drive of the previous essay, FuSe 20 Z, where the focus was on the exercise of doing monologues on the topic of *Comparison*. The first section returns to the problem of meeting Molly and the issue of being Molly, and the second section dwells on

that topic in relation to my planning and changes of plan, and your refreshed plans for 2012, or your bucket list past 2020.

And now I add a paragraph some months later, in February 2012. Sections one and two were completed in November of 2011, and this introduction went on to indicate the contents of further sections. But the intervening months saw the emergence of the pamphlet *Method in Theology 101 AD 9011: The Road to Religious Reality*, which took off from those two sections. The pamphlet serves not only as a context for these next three seminars, but it reaches out to hint at the work of the rest of the seminars. And it certainly sublates a lot of what was to be said in the remaining sections of this essay.

What, then, was I to do, am I to do, about the pointers intended for the remaining sections here? The reply to that question will emerge in a single final third section here, with the title of FuSe 22 itself. It shifts to the practicalities of facing into the sixth seminar on doctrines. But there seems to me to be a need here to note the deep importance of this year in my effort to lift Lonergan studies out of its predominantly settled commonsense attitude. The focus of the years is on a single key foundational achievement: the identification of the complex scientific meaning of **Comparison**. That identification is to serve, in these coming decades, as a measure of the weakness and folly of present conventions that tie the meaning of *comparison* to an old-style comparing of X and Y, whether X and Y be giant periods of history or small individual strugglers towards meaning.

1. Speaking of Molly to Lonergan Students

In continuity with the rambles of FuSe 20 Z, I claim that I am on the edge of the stage, Frank with an interest in Faith Healing. Yet I am being Frank talking riskily of Molly Sweeney. In another section I shall talk about the specialist nature of the talk, but for the moment let us get on with it.

I imitate Frank Hardy, but why not wind my address, my local Ballybeg but also the Ballymore of Lonerganism, around the odd stand of Sarah against The Man with which I concluded my short piece on "A Mess of Meanings to Shape"? But

no, best just leave that to a footnote reminder. Like Frank Hardy, I am near death, but not Beckett-mooded: "I'm too frightened this evening to listen to myself rot, waiting for the great red lapses of the heart".¹ In the mess of meanings to shape there is a mess of misapprehensions of death which I oppose cheerily with the jingle of my Dublin schooldays, "Oh death where is thy sting-a-ling-a-ling."

But I wish to address you, asking you to address yourselves, quest yourselves: "Molly Sweeney, c'est moi". The request and quest may remind you of Flaubert's "La Bovary, c'est moi", but for me it echoes a fun evening in the beginning of the Florida conference, when a Scripture scholar asked Lonergan what was the answer to the critical problem. Lonergan did what Canadians would recognize as a little Trudeau gesture, finger on head, proclaiming, "c'est moi".²

It had been evident to me since 1956 that Lonergan was a glorious providential answer. But again, I am distracted from my directed monologue, my talk to you. Might Francis Hardy become Francis Bernardone? "St Francis deliberately did not see the wood for the trees what gave him his extraordinary personal power was this That there never was a man that looked into those brown burning eyes without being certain that Francis Bernardone was really interested in him"³ or her. And might you, Molly or Jack or Jill, be alone in my sights? But I am really hoping for a turnabout of this interest, so that you are interested in looking in your own coloured eyes. At all events, I come to my nasty suggestion. You do not need to read or see that Friel play, *Molly Sweeney*, though of course a presence to its two acts or seventy pages would, literally set you up: monologues of a life weaved into an hour's mounting behind-those-eyes neurochemical intensity.

A fixed staging with Molly in the middle, husband Frank on the audience's right, sight-doctor on the audience's left. How is Molly to survive the hour, the fifty years, pummeled by learning left and daytime right, by Lonerganism and convention?

¹From a 1946 short story of Beckett, "The Calmative".

² It was Easter Saturday evening 1970, a memorable evening of celebration. On Easter Sunday morning I was privileged to say Mass for the gathering and recall preaching on Saul Bellow's dangling man.

³ G.K.Chesterton, *St. Francis of Assisi*, London, 1951, 114-5.

How's that for nastiness? It is a nastiness lurking in the final paragraph of my little book, *Sane Economics and Fusionism*, where I stopped myself short of a comparison (in the old sense? Or edging towards the new?) of two Lonergan-centred volumes, one of 1970 and one of 2010, and the Lonergan goings-on in the years between. No harm, indeed, in repeating that unfavorable concluding paragraph of the book.

“Should I comment on these? I resist the temptation. I have been eloquent all of them at various stages in the past fifty years. Nor do I see any value in enlarging on the sad, if subtle, commitment to non-explanatory meaning that pervades both the volumes I mentioned. The sadness reaches destructively into the next generations, for the legitimate unexpressed desire in so man for a viewpoint at the level of the times is frustrated. I can only appeal to each of us to ask, ‘Is it I?’, in relation to my dialectic and foundational accusation of our settling for rich description, and descriptive comparisons of rich descriptions, in place of meeting the desperate global need of the exercise of either of Lonergan’s canons of explanation.”⁴

But the appeal now to each of us to ask “is it I?” takes a new turn: am I, not a perpetrator of old ways, but a victim of them, my hidden blind Eden⁵ suffering an adjustment into being “virtuous as a scream”?⁶

Who are you, Molly Sweeney? I have cut off my venture into Friel, his works, his commentators, his critics – we’ll come back to that in the next section – and set you up before a mirror of words. The curiosity of the word *Sweeny* pointing to atrophy, disappearance, and of the word *Molly*, short for *Mollienisia*, referring to a brightly coloured fish regularly trapped in an aquarium.

⁴ *Sane Economics and Fusionism*, Axial Publications, 2010, 93.

⁵ I have in mind here a pointing and topic that is to turn up later (see note 19 below), but in particular I am recalling the song of Marco Antonio Solis, *Si te pudiera mentir*, (*If I could lie to you*), and the line: “it does not help to walk away from my eden”. I have used the song at various conferences to twist the tone towards home. Walking away from the core skin-loneliness of being human is brutally axial. The artist can walk away from that in the turn to talk about art.

⁶ The phrase is Sarah’s, from George Ryga, *Sunrise on Sarah*, Talonbooks, British Columbia, 1973: see Fuse 20 Z, where I refer extensively to the play after note 10.

There is, of course, a whole artistry of such entrapment, in all its dozen forms and in all the languages of the world. But it brings to mind my singing for Lonergan during his last evening in Dublin, Summer 1971, in James Taylor's words: "Oh Jesus, don't let Toronto take my soul away." Did, does, Aye-doctor and convention take his soul away? Certainly from left and right came and come resentment of his embrace of his soul's desire "to embrace the universe in a single view."⁷

But the issue is not Lonergan but you, and how you stand at the end of your listening to left and right. Will you end up, atrophied in some academic aquarium, doing Lonergan scholarship in the same old same mold, not even fermenting into the terrible honesty of Molly's final words: "And it seems to be all right. And why should I question any of it anyway?"

The deep personal issue for you, Molly, Jack or Jill, as serious carer, is the chasm – or should I say the existential gap – between comparison as myth and comparison as mystery.

2. Speaking of Comparison

The existential gap sits now-here, nowhere, between us, as the last seven words of the previous section rattle formless in your cranial neurochemistry. How might you and I engineer the shift to aggregated formfulness?

I draw attention now briefly to the strategy of my suggested conversation among us all in these next three seminars. The conversation is to be *per se* foundational: together we shall seek to conceive the dynamics of the forwards specialties. We may well, however, *per accidens* and *per interest*, succeed in doing work intrinsic to the last three functional specialties, especially since there is a change in my plans: moving to a focus on economics rather than on drama. But the topic remains **Comparison**. You may well be puzzled about this focus, but I leave that to section 4 here. In that section, too, I sketch the manner in which we are to pursue our foundational work in this year and give some pointers about the economic

⁷ *Insight*, 442.

drive. In the final fifth section I return to the monologue style in an effort to illustrate autobiographic doctrinal talk.

The drive towards economic pragmatics may not be of general interest, so the change in my plans need not affect your own bent. Indeed, you may hold to my original idea regarding the focus: that original idea was to pursue the topic of comparison in the zone of drama. Circumstances invited me to shift attention to the zone of economics. But it is worthwhile to pause over my original plan, especially if there are those who wish to follow up on it, either in the context of the seminars or later.

Certainly the world of drama is a huge cultural problem and enterprise, as well as being a rather useful deviation from the usual areas of attention of Lonergan students: disputes in philosophy, theology, biblical studies, whatever, about canons of composition and criticism. This usefulness was predominant in my selection of the many facets of drama as a topic. Attending to that area would give new life to the problem of the canons of hermeneutics, an area, in any event, sadly neglected by Lonergan scholarship. Might that neglect not be undermined by minding the need, in this other area, of canons and their implied positionings?

But let me go back to Molly Sweeney and the other plays I have referenced. My tactic has been, indeed, not to reference characters and performances in some comfortable academic mode, but to discomfort you by pressing upon you the poise of these stage-strollers. Perhaps you have taken serious note of the horrid fact that poise is uncomfortably close to the poise that becomes dominant in the functional specialties after line 20 of *Method 250*. We already have, then, that benefit from my pause in the world of the stage.

I have shifted away from enlarging on the greater global benefits. The creation of plays, their performance and criticism, the global stories of such activities, all are massively in need of the shifts out of an established truncated arrogance and pretentiousness. There is a sense, of course, in which all these goings-on are might I say blameless? a result of what moral theologians call invincible ignorance? a fault of a massive colonization? One might wonder about the blamelessness of post-modern talk of "the need for the interrogation of all

manner of narrative,” a talk that does not notice the need for self-interrogating the interrogator? Yet, if one talks to these people, one finds a certain blamelessness: neglected subjects, swept under the mat of lower and higher education, are chemically “unaware” of their sophisticated entrapment, colonization.

That sophistication can so so slowly be turned towards a new stage of human luminousness by a communal effort of people who take Lonergan’s challenge seriously. But that challenge is one that I decided to forego here in favour of a parallel challenge in economics. Still, I appeal to my readers to keep an eye on that challenge, and the like challenge in any areas of arts, sciences and technologies. Meantime we cut back to the topic of our speaking-poise in economics in order both to remedy present madnesses of governments, economists, banks, etc, to lift the community of Lonergan followers to some sense of the discontinuous meaning of comparison that is to separate effective efforts of the people of the Tower of Able from the mess of present effete Lonergan studies.

So I return to Molly Sweeney and the few nudges I have given. I have used only that single excellent book, *The Diviner*, to give you leads both on that play and on the entire problem skimpily mentioned above. The index of that book gives goodly leads on contexts to be cultivated for reading or watching the play, but here my interest remains in you discomforting yourself in the face of the Jackson-Hegel mirror: the discomfort heightened by the context of note 42 of FuSe 20 Z. I conclude here with two quotations from **The Diviner** that add to that context.

“*Molly Sweeney* ... At its core is is a bitter argument or *agon* about the nature of internal and external vision, and its relation to belief, understanding, and expression – passionate and political, it places woman and her freedom at the centre of the world and yet lures her through an opaque field to the border country where ‘beyond’ is to negotiated.”⁸

⁸Richard Pine, *The Diviner, The Art of Brian Friel*, University College Dublin Press, 1997, 288. Friel is best known for his play *Dancing at Lughnasa*. The two plays of Friel that are mentioned in this essay are *Faith Healer* – whose principal character is Frank Hardy – and *Molly Sweeney*. No need to rush out to buy them. I make clear enough

“*Faith Healer* presents a blurring of subjective and objective as the players grope towards personal truth. In *Molly Sweeney* we find the same blurred sense of innocence debauched by experience, both in Molly herself and in the two men by whom her world is colonized – husband and doctor – who, in disparate but cognate ways, come to represent different aspects of ‘father’ and therefore ‘home’.”⁹

Am I another I-doctor? As Hermine suggests to Harry Haller, “our only guide is our homesickness.”¹⁰ Lonergan’s homesickness led him to break forward in dazzling solitude to a long-term effective answer to the problem of Cosmopolis. What is yours?

“The Seamless Symphonic Christ”

.... And what’s my answer, you may ask? I hesitated to add any solid answer to my initial nudgings about the sixth functional specialty. Curiously, I never hesitated thus when teaching introductory mathematical physics: but in that area there was a culture to support the students in knowing that my talking was doctrinal, that they would get a better grip on what I was pointing to if they carried on successfully beyond their fourth year of studies. Here, we are in an alien culture, one which seeks to colonize us into an academic aquarium instead of moving us towards a cross-channel swim.

But I decided to take the risk, and the risk is there in the title of this section. There is where the struggle with the meaning of *Comparison* is to lead the Tower Community. There? : a remote **there** that yet is no where now here, “try again, fail again, fail better,”¹¹ better herenow in 9011 A.D. Let me try for a compact expression: less dangerous and more teasing.

When I got sufficient distance in my reach for the meaning of *comparison*, finding it meshing with a fullness of the second canon of hermeneutics, and indeed with a

points here about them and our entrapment. Pine’s book is a great read, especially if you can work the lift out of truncation in both himself and Friel, and in the other commentators. There is further discussion of Friel, Pine and drama in FuSe 20 Z, “Regarding Foundational Issues”.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Herman Hess, *Steppenwolf*, Penguin, 179.

¹¹ A piece of Samuel Beckett: the reference escapes me.

fullness of a Standard Model,¹² it took on the dimensions of a solution to the problem of the treatise on the mystical body of Christ that Lonergan had posed in various places from 1935 to 1953.¹³ “The Mystical Body of Christ”? I simply do not like that name: a day-long struggle led me to the title of this section. But why the change from the traditional name? First, I do not like the word *mystical*. It is a foggy word, badly abused. What we are at here and with the title is just Christian thinking and its expression: there is nothing mysterious in the fruitful understanding of Faith that comes from decades of patient contemplation, while the mystery itself is totally dark.¹⁴ Then there is the word *body* with its odd suggestions that I do not wish to air:¹⁵ in contrast there is the puzzling synaesthetic mesh of sewing players into the intimate cosmic chemical¹⁶ causality of Christ.

Section 3: The 2012 Crisis of Speaking To the Future

We find ourselves, then, at the abrupt end of an ambitious project, though not at the end of the fuller project of meeting that crisis: there is, for instance, the related project of a set of volumes of *The Journal of Macrodynamical Analysis* on the series of functional specialties.

There is a great deal more to say, and initially I had intended to express here some further main points in a compact doctrinal way. Yet it seems better to cut this short. I look at my fresh notes for this ending and see shocking new horizons,

¹² I explicitly introduce the name *Standard Model* in the 2008 Website book, *Lonergan’s Standard Model of Effective Global Inquiry*.

¹³ See Frederick Crowe, *Christ and History. The Christology of Bernard Lonergan from 1935 to 1982*, St. Paul University Press, 2005, 34, 39, 49. See also note g on page 807 of *Insight*.

¹⁴ It is important to reach self-luminous contemplative and active performance on the focusing of mystery that Lonergan deals with in thesis 5 of CWL 11.

¹⁵ The locus classicus on this is chapter 8 of *Insight*.

¹⁶ The question emerges in full intimacy in note 124 of the pamphlet *Method in Theology 101 AD 9011* : The Road to Religious Reality, but here I would note the need for the full heuristic of the metaword W (Lonergan biography, 161), which pivots on the ingesting of what I call the **comeabout** text in *Insight*: “So it comes about that the extroverted subjected visualizing extensions and experiencing durations gives place to the subject orientated to the objective of the unrestricted desire to know and affirming beings differentiated by certain conjugate potencies, forms and acts grounding certain laws and frequencies.” (*Insight*, 537). The chemical zeal bubbling out of the first second of this absolutely supernatural cosmos (See *Insight*, 722, end) twines into the history a causal unity and intimacy of the minding eyes of Jesus.

horizons that would shock me of a month ago, a shock in line with my view of adult contemplative growth.¹⁷ There is to be a new name for the third person of the trinity, and a new trinitarian interpersonal dynamic of ontic and phyletic living: both these lifts twining round a new theology of chemistry and sexuality.¹⁸ There are to be new trenchant precisions about the inadequacy of commonsense speaking, even when it reaches the eloquence of poets.¹⁹ I re-read yesterday - as the decision to end the seminars fermented in the weavings²⁰ of (discernment)³ - *Cantower 9*, which I had wished to upgrade in *FuSe 24*, “From *Cantower 9* to Cloud **Nein**”, and found how young I was then, a decade ago, at seventy, yet also found that I had succeeded in speaking to so few then, that further doctrinal pointings now would be similarly inadequate, indeed acceleratingly more so. What is needed is an emergent community detailing foundational eden-steps patiently and pedagogically. Perhaps my final work, *Method in Theology 101 AD 9011 : The Road to Religious Reality*, will help towards finding those steps.

¹⁷ My neatest pointing regarding this is in the concluding pages of *Lack in the Beingstalk: A Giants Causeway* (Axial Publishing, 2007). The needed shift to kataphatic contemplation had already been discussed in Prehumous 4 – 8, five essays on “Foundational Prayer”. *Lack in the Beingstalk* emphasizes phyletic growth in chapter 4, “The Calculus of Variation”. The parallel drawn there between the mathematico-physical calculus of variation and the calculus of variation that is to be functional specialization can be carried over to the ontic problem. Symbolic of both ontic and phyletic immaturity in humanity is Queen Dido’s problem of maximizing the area surrounded by a certain length (*Aeneid* Book I, 360-368). The problem was satisfactorily solved by Steiner (1833) and Weierstrass (1872). It was Weierstrass that guided Husserl into his thesis (1882) on the calculus of variation. One could profitably muse for a week or a decade over that fact that, in the calculus of self-variation, we not too different from Dido’s poise in the lesser calculus. You might extend the parallel to present destructive economic ignorance.

¹⁸ I refer you back here to note 16 above, which points to notes in the pamphlet *Method in Theology 101 AD 9011 : The Road to Religious Reality*.

¹⁹ I am speaking here of the Tower inadequacy of commonsense poets, even the best of them. Generalized empirical method in its full scope is to be the common ground of that Tower community. I would therefore note that my two essays, *Bridgepoise 3* and *Bridgepoise 10*, on the need for aesthetic consciousness in science, need discomfoting complementing: the authentic aesthete bends towards explanatory understanding and self-understanding. Recall note 5 above.

²⁰ Expressions like “(discernment)³” were weaved into my heuristic in the *Cantowers*. The phrase (discernment)³ - the discernment of discernment of discernments - occurs significantly in the conclusion to the first chapter of *The Redress of Poise*, “The Value of Economics for Lonergan Students”.