

Fusion 17

Lonergan Studies and the SGEME of Recurrence¹.

Fusion 16 lists the people who have already taken the risk of joining the odd new society **SGEME**, the **S**ociety for the **G**lobalization of **E**ffective **M**ethods of **E**volving. In inviting them to take the risk I referred them to various writings, but noted that a brief indication of the nature of the risk was available in this essay. Here, then, I will venture into some elaboration on the nature of the risk and the enterprise. Repetition is inevitable if I go on too long: I have been moving towards this stand for decades, but especially in the recent two sets of essays, **Surfs**, and **Fusions**. Besides, going on at length would not necessarily help the simple decision involved. It is best to be brief here and take up the more complex issues in the year 2010 with what I would hope is a larger group of members.

The minimal risk in being a member is simply joining, without any other commitment of involvement, with others who wish for the emergence of an efficient - one, true and beautiful - metaphysics. "It is quite legitimate to seek in the efficient cause of the science, that is , in the scientist, the reason why a science forms a unified whole."² Can a metaphysics which is good be inefficient? The blunt answer is, No. "What is good, always is concrete."³ The blunt answer, of course, needs a backing of understanding, something beyond this brief essay.⁴ It involves seeing the place in

¹A non-footnoted version of this was sent out in September-October in a search for members of **SGEME**. The version contained only necessary direct references. These references are included here, and extended. But the invitation to join **SGEME** remains the same.

²*Topics in Education*, 160, line 16.

³*Method in Theology*, 27.

⁴The backing, for instance, would involve becoming luminous regarding large historical questions about the good in the making: for instance, does Lonerganism show signs of being the tadpole of a later frog? Or does it show signs of what Lonergan remarked to me about in Easter

Insight of the reflections on **Cosmopolis** and Lonergan's later achievement of solving the problem of a collaborative **Cosmopolis**. That solution coincides with the solution of Cosmopolis's problem: the problem of efficiency, the problem of implementation.⁵

What would solve the problem of implementation? : a sufficiently integrated global back-up to a functional group of implementers. Such a group I have symbolized - but with an acute realism - by talking of a member in each of 10,000 villages.⁶ "It will make the practical economist as familiar a professional figure as the doctor, the lawyer or the engineer,"⁷ but now we are talking about quite a new breed of political economists, informed and unhidden persuaders. This is the major concern of *The*

1961, signs of being a matter of "big frogs in little ponds," thus in continuity with post-Tridentine theology? An illustrative and critical aspect of this continuity is its contrast with the leap of Lonergan associated with his taking very seriously the advances of modern physics: on this see chapter 1, Part Three, of *Bernard Lonergan: His Life and Leading Ideas*, by Pierrot Lambert and Philip McShane, to appear in English, from Axial Publishing, in 2010 and later in French and in other languages.

⁵Fred Crowe and I joked regularly about the defects of the two indices, *Insight* and *Method*. My index to *Method* is a pretty shoddy one, done in a hurry with pen and paper in December 1971; his index, a product of four months, is a magnificent achievement. One of Crowe's twinkling remarks to me about the later index was "there's an awful lot more about feelings in it!" But note: **implementation** got no entry in that later index, although there are a dozen explicit references to it, not to speak of 100 implicit references. I would note the same flaw in the translations available to me: The French *Insight* has as a translation of implementation *la mise on ouvre*: there is no index reference; the Italian *Insight* uses the word *realizzazione*, and again there is no index reference; the Spanish *Insight* has *implementacion*, with two index references; the German *Insight* has *Umsetzung* in the definition, though elsewhere the word *Durchfuhrung* is also used. Neither word is referenced in the index.

⁶I have used this image during the past years: it emerged out of my imagining a dialectic group of 10 people back in *Cantower VIII*, "Slopes: an Encounter", where I also noted the convergence of disciplines from relatively autonomous researching to a shared global dialectic enterprise. The later image is of a group of 22,220 collaborating people, 10,000 researchers, 1000 interpreters, 100 historians, and so on to 10,000 in the functional zone of Communications.

⁷*For A New Political Economy*, 37.

*Perfectibility of Man*⁸ becoming and being a good. “It is a major concern, for it is in this final stage that theological reflection bears fruit. Without the first seven, of course, there is not fruit to be borne. But without the last the first seven are in vain, for they fail to mature.”⁹ The seven as identified by Lonergan are familiar to most of my readers, but my major concern is just with two divisions of labour: a first division that is a group reaching for the conception and affirmation of a potentially effective metaphysics; the second division that is the focused labour of some few or some multitude - perhaps the frontline of the risk-group of **SGEME** - to bring about concrete implementation.¹⁰ It would be a lengthy diversion in this context to elaborate on the operable strategy envisaged here: the backfiring of the **SGEME** group calling forth, from the mixed bag of the first division, the magnificent seven, samurai saviours of 10,000 villages, suggested by Lonergan.

What would motivate you to risk being identified with **SGEME**? Simply, the failure of the present metaphysics that is called Lonerganism, now some fifty years old, to be effective.¹¹ But I repeat a cautionary word: there is a genuine risk here that I would wish vulnerable students or job-seekers to note and act on. Such unfortunate younger people need, perhaps, to keep their identification with **SGEME** private until they are ‘out of the woods’. Recall how Lonergan failed Logic in London university; recall his

⁸The title of an old classic by John Passmore, (1970: Duckworth and Company, London) which I refer to regularly as symbolic of a fundamental problem, indeed the problem of *Insight*'s Cosmopolis. In *Joistings 22* “Reviewing Mathews’ *Lonergan’s Quest*, and Ours”, I note how the characteristics of Cosmopolis listed in the conclusion of chapter 7 of *Insight* are verified in functional collaboration. I would note that the word collaboration occurs 29 times in the section of ten pages, 740-750, of *Insight* titled “Resumption of the Heuristic Structure of the Solution”.

⁹*Method in Theology*, 355.

¹⁰There is more on this topic in Russell Baker’s Website, **libertybelle.ca** This is a massive challenge with a parallel in the not-quite-“successful sciences” (*Method in Theology*, 4) of advertizing, persuasion, therapy.

¹¹Again - see note 6 above - this is a complex dialectic issue involving especially the unwritten stories of 20th century methodologies.

advice to me in Oxford, “It is just a union card Find out what your man wants, and figure out a way to give it to him.”¹²

In musing creatively over this *Fusion 17* in these past months I have covered many pages with notes and suggestions, yet in the end it seems to me best to halt soon. There are glorious and positive issues of the transition to the third and fourth stages of meaning,¹³ to the emergence of characters of *Praxis*,¹⁴ to a new world of *kataphatic* contemplation,¹⁵ to a new “being at home”¹⁶ in eschatological anticipation, a seeding of new arts and technologies and institutions flagging our way home. There are sad and negative issues of the brutal neglect by Lonergan’s disciples of his invitation - and

¹²I quote from a letter of Lonergan to me, October 23 1968.

¹³On the fourth stage of meaning see, my contribution, “The Fourth Stage of Meaning”, to *Meaning and History in Systematic Theology: Essays in Honour of Robert M. Doran S.J.*, Marquette University Press, 2009. The fourth stage of meaning is a seed at the heart of all stages. The third stage of meaning, to emerge from our human **sgeming** in this next millennium, coincides with the phylogenetic “second time of the temporal subject”(Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, CWL 12, 405). The fifth, quintessential, stage is the dynamic reality of everlasting eschatological development that may well include a countable infinity of humans. I would note this question of infinity as related to a “turn to the future” of Thomas brilliant thinking about the eternity of the world in articles one and two of question 46 of the *Prima Pars*: see especially q. 46, a.2, ad 7m, where he weaves his way to claiming “so it is not impossible that humans are generated *in infinitum*”. I would add that one of the disgraces of modern theology, as Rahner pointed out in his final address of (I think) February 1984, is the absence of any serious effort at an eschatology, a minding grip on The Big Clasp, a molecular circumincession, spiraling forward everlastingly The Big Bang.

¹⁴I note two texts worth considering on the matter of character: There is *Method in Theology*, chapter 14, section 1, where the word occurs. Then there is the beginning of the Aristotelian *Magna Moralia*: “Since our purpose is to speak about matters to do with character, we must first inquire of what character is a branch. To speak concisely, then, it would seem to be a branch of nothing else than statecraft.”

¹⁵I dealt with the challenge of the shift to *kataphatic* prayer in *Prehumous 4,5,6,7,8*, all five essays under the general title of “Foundational Prayer”.

¹⁶*Method in Theology*, 14, 350-1.

Ortega y Gasset's - "to be on the level of one's times."¹⁷ These are issues to be aired as we try to move out of a conventional following of Lonergan, all too much in continuity with old forms of ineffective thinking and writing and convening.

So, I ask for the minimal risk of, yes, I suppose an expression of discontent with Lonerganism, but positively there is the hope, the hope in the heart of the struggling Lonergan of the Roman years, who knew that "the antecedent willingness of hope has to advance from a generic reinforcement of the pure desire to an adapted and specialized auxiliary ever ready to offset every interference."¹⁸ **SGEME** is merely a group of people who would take a stand - even if they do nothing else¹⁹ - on the need to take seriously Lonergan's inclusion of implementation in the task of the community of metaphysicians.

¹⁷*Method in Theology*, 350; Jose Ortega y Gasset, *Mission of the University*, Princeton University Press 1944, translated by Howard Lee Nostrand, 57. "at the level of his time*", and more particularly, at the level of the ideas of his time." (Italics, the author's. The asterisk is also the authors, to a note: *For the concept of 'the height of the times,' see *The Revolt of the Masses*. *The Revolt of the Masses* was, in fact, published the same year as that in which the lectures on the University were give, 1930. It is significant, in our present context, to consider Howard Lee Nostrand's remark in his Introduction: "The title *La Rebelion de las Masas*, by which he means a rebellion, more akin to passive evasion than to revolt, on the part of the ordinary man against the burden of taking a responsibility part in modern society according to the best knowledge our age affords" (p.26). My appeal here is to ordinary women and men, and to a rebellion that takes responsibility: but enough was said about that in *Fusion 16*. In a hundred years or so, there is the hope that the rebellion will evolve into a global ethos that supports what I call The Tower of Able, thus solving "the problem of general history, which is the real catch."(*Topics in Education*, 236). On the solution to that problem see McShane, "Insight within a New Global Context," *Fifty Years of Insight: Bernard Lonergan's Contribution to Philosophy and Theology*, edited by Neil Ormerod, Australian Theological Forum Press, 2010.

¹⁸*Insight*, CWL 3, 747.

¹⁹What else might they, might you, do? That is something that is to emerge from the contacts set up, both by this effort and by the related Website, **libertybelle.ca** mentioned in note 10. I would draw attention to one instance that is of significance: a volume of *Divyadaan; Journal of Education and Philosophy* 21 (2010) devoted to the question "Do You Want an Effective Global Economics?" The writing involves a group of six **SGEME** collaborators in a new style of presentation that aims to be effective.

You may take the risk I have talked about, then, by simply e-mailing Bob Henman [rohenman50@hotmail.com] or me [pmcshane@shaw.ca] for inclusion in the list of *Fusion 16*: a name and an e-mail. Whether you go any further in collaborating will be up to you. But the issue is “the transposition of the inner issue into an outer social milieu.”²⁰ The challenge is the relocating of *I Corinthians* 13 into a freshened expression of *I Corinthians* 12 and 14: we need a strange new collaboration, perhaps towards the billion gardens of a new humanity,²¹ “a psychic force that sweeps living human bodies, linked together in charity, to the joyful, courageous, whole-hearted, yet intelligently controlled performance of the tasks set by a world order in which the problem of evil is not suppressed but transcended.”²²

²⁰*Insight, CWL 3, 715.*

²¹Like the image talked of in note 6 above, this is a useful one to get us out of various ruts. A billion gardens on the globe is a neat challenge to the silly one of profit motivation. It is also practical, if one takes each garden as half an acre. The average Chinese farm is half an acre. Again, those billion half-acre gardens would only account for one sixteenth of the usable land, not counting ocean farming. Then there are elementary technologies like the treadle-pump, costing \$30. One must also strenuously imagine an evolution of nano-technology, not to speak of advances in industry and commerce. “Nor is it impossible that further developments in science should make small units self-sufficient on an ultramodern standard of living to eliminate commerce and industry, to transform agriculture into a superchemistry, to clear away finance and even money, to make economic solidarity a memory, and power over nature the only difference between high civilization and primitive gardening.”(Lonergan, *For A New Political Economy*, 20)

²²*Insight, CWL 3, 745.*