

August 2, 2018

Public Challenging *Method* Board III

Challenging the Referee

Might we face, gradually in a hard-to-win new togetherness, the full challenge? I am thinking of the prayer of Jesus that Lonergan recalls as he ends *Method in Theology*: “. . . may they all be one . . . ? (John 17, 21),” but thinking thus of the community that has gathered round Lonergan’s writings. Yes, local communities, East, West and South, have their different interests, but beyond that there is a massive split with which we need to deal. The split has to do with the character of Cosmopolis. “Still, what is cosmopolis? Like every other object of human intelligence, it is in the first instance an X, what is to be known when one understands.”¹ “What on earth is to be done? I have done all that can be done in spare time and without special opportunities to have contact”² with the other side of the split, and I have been rejected, chastised, but mainly ignored.

But here I have a fresh opportunity, a seething seeding zone requiring the attention of Lonergan’s new scientists, of Lonergan’s new science, “a *scienza nuova*,”³ of progress. The problem is that these scientists have yet to emerge, and their emergence is massively resisted by the majority of his disciples committedly at home on the wrong side of the split.

The fresh opportunity concerns journals and their processes of refereeing, but the new science has a massively, fantastically, different eightfold perspective on such journals

¹ *Insight*, 263. This is a crisis point in a first reading of *Insight*. Have you any sense of the nature of hunting for an X, like Maxwell’s struggle to define Light? See *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958–1964*, CWL 6, 121, 155.

² I am quoting from the conclusion of Lonergan’s 1935 letter to a superior. The full letter is available in Pierrot Lambert and *Philip McShane, Bernard Lonergan. His Life and Leading Ideas*, Axial Publishing, 2010, 144–54.

³ *Shorter Papers*, CWL 20, 223: ending a reviewing of two books on the character of Christian Philosophy.

and their cyclically differentiated roles.⁴ The journal to which my rejected article belongs is to be of the class that is fourth in that cycle of journals, and its “cumulative and progressive results”⁵ are to come from a unique application of the process I have called *Loneragan’s 1833 Overture*.

“I have done all that I can in spare time” since 1966, when Loneragan tutored me in the broad dynamics of the new science,⁶ but my hints, nudges, presentations, bluntness, have—yes, I repeat—been met by, predominantly, silence. My topic and Loneragan’s is *Light* and a radical leap to the deepest Enlightenment shift of an effective second time of the temporal subject,⁷ but my talk of that Light has been received by—and here I generously exaggerate—a Newtonian bewilderment in the face of an engineeringly-talented Maxwell interested in solar panels and vertical farming.⁸ The Newtonian bewilderment has to do with a locked-in allegiance to “bolder spirits”⁹ like Aristotle.

⁴ In chapter four of the 1990 book *Process: Introducing Themselves to Young (Christian) Minders*, (available on my website) I give a brief account of the shift in the patterns of chemistry journals after the paradigm shift of 1869 into the periodic table standard model. There has been no such shift in Loneragan studies. The idea of nine genera of journals relating to the new science of Loneragan’s paradigm shift is, of course, quite foreign to the board. The distinctively variable role in assessment of contributions to be played by *Assembly* and *Loneragan’s 1833 Overture* in the different journals is, well, altogether more than foreign. More on this in the sixth essay of this series.

⁵ *Method in Theology*, 4. Relate this to his view of cyclic operations: [1] 1935: “Essay in Fundamental Sociology,” in *Loneragan’s Early Economic Research, texts and commentary* by Michael Shute, University of Toronto Press, 2010, 20; [2] 1962: *Early Works on Theological Method I*, “Knowing, Believing and Theology,” *CWL* 22, 140.

⁶ Gradually, through genetic reconstruction, we shall become clearer on Loneragan’s climb and its relation to my Crest, in which “I rest my case” (see the title to *Tinctures of System 6*). My Crest, $\{\mathbf{M}(\mathbf{W}_3)^{\text{OFT}}\}$ ⁴, is in creative continuity with his searching struggles of 1965–71. The genetic retrieval is altogether beyond the next generation of Loneragan students. See, in this connection, the early footnotes of Public Challenging *Method* Board IV.

⁷ See *The Triune God: Systematics*, *CWL* 12, 403. Between the two times there is the Axial period of more than a few millennia, the zone of our present misery and entrapment, the zone that strangles the intellectual life of the board.

⁸ There is a book to be written about this lift of Maxwell into the fullness of the new science. Might you muse a little on it, so that we may push further into The Light in later essays? But no: as I pause now over the unity of my effort I see I had best cut short these essays, placing the push for The Light strategically in a second last Essay, number 6.

⁹ These are, for readers, massively problematic words at the beginning of the second paragraph of the first chapter of *Method in Theology*. For the skimmers, like the *Method* Board and their referee, they are unproblematic. To this problem of the connection of the second paragraph

I advanced that Aristotle was a bourgeois, that he introduced the distinction between speculative and practical to put the ‘good’ as Socrates and Plato conceived it out of court. I should say further that my views are neither obscure nor difficult. It is entirely a question of being willing to submit to a bit of dialectic and, the big point, being willing to admit that there is an answer and the answer has to be found.¹⁰

Loneragan found the answer in 1965, and in his tired sickness expressed it inadequately but brilliantly in *Method in Theology*. It is the challenging brilliance that is the topic of the essay rejected by *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies*, indeed, according to Byrne,¹¹ rejected on the basis of the anonymous referee that he quotes—though from the text itself it seems clear that the referee is part of the *Method* Board.

You will have noticed that my title for this series of essays remains the same throughout, “Public Challenging *Method* Board.” The sameness is obviously part of my strategy, and to that strategy my minority group and I shall add various other discomforts of public challenging. The discomforts weave round the issue of unity raised in my first paragraph above. To move forward in this massively novel Enlightenment requires, statistically of course, a healing of the split that haunts Lonergan studies. Other statistics are involved, like the statistics of a break forwards in, say, musicology¹² or law¹³: a point

of *Method in Theology*, with nudges towards the courage of, yes, a discombobulating fresh beginning, I return in the final seventh essay.

¹⁰ I quote, in patchy fashion, from Lonergan’s letter of 22 January 1935 to his Jesuit Superior. The letter is reproduced fully on pages 144–54 of Pierrot Lambert and Philip McShane, *Bernard Lonergan. His Life and Leading Ideas*, Axial Publishing, 2010. The passage cited is on page 152.

¹¹ Best quote again, a passing fresh reading, the correspondence: “Dear Phil, Thank you for submitting your article, “A Paradigmatic Panel Dynamic for (Advanced) Students (of Religion)” to *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies*. I am sorry to inform you that the referees have not recommended the publication of your article in *MJLS*. With this letter I am enclosing the referee’s report on your article. Sincerely, Patrick H. Byrne, Co-editor, *MJLS*” Note that I do not here venture to identify the board, nor the co-editor, nor the referee. I note plural, *referees*, in Byrne’s correspondence. Was there another assessment of the article, or is the reference casual, pointing perhaps to a group acceptance of the single assessment?

¹² In 1969, working in the Bodleian Library in Oxford, I was startled to find the relevance of Lonergan’s functional analysis to musicology. I presented my results in one of two papers at the Florida Conference: “Metamusic and Self-Meaning”. The paper is the second chapter of *The Shaping of the Foundations*, a book that was published in 1976 and is now available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.org/published-books>.

¹³ See the final chapter of Bruce Anderson, *Discovery in Legal Decision-Making*, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Netherlands, 1996.

made by Lonergan.¹⁴ But my concern in this series of essays is with the cultural destructiveness of the controlled horrors of more than 95% of present Lonergan studies.¹⁵ My concern is strategically focused. It thus gains bite. Yet there is an oddity in my not now getting into intelligent presentation: what, after all, did Lonergan gain by spending those tired years of the late 1960s doing just that? The product of his labours, *Method in Theology*, found no serious readership in perhaps 99% of his enthusiastic following. So I am back with Lonergan's poise in *Insight*: "from the viewpoint of the pupil it begins by cajoling or forcing attention and not by explaining the intended goal or by inviting an intelligent and reasonable cooperation."¹⁶ And indeed, perhaps the forcing and cajoling can benefit from touches "of Satire and Humor."¹⁷ So let us together—are you there, referee?—home in on what the *Method's* referee had to say about "A Paradigmatic Panel for (Advances) Students (of Religion)".

I recalled, above, in note 11, the communication of the board's verdict, and it is best to place here my reply before I move to our musing on the referee's summary dismissal. Yes, I am repeating and will repeat again, for we need to circle round this astonishing travesty in freshening freshnesses.

Dear Pat,

a sad business, this. The referee shockingly misread the article. It is not a narrow report, but a full heuristic paradigm. And oh, yes, my stuff is, I would claim the referee's word, "Prophetic". So, then, the little tinkering mentioned at the end of his[her] comments is a joke: "The editors of *MJLS* do take seriously the issue raised in this submission about the state of the academic disciplines. They are considering steps that *MJLS* might take to address this concern more seriously in the near future." That not-near future, if the seriousness blossomed into honesty, should develop in taking Lonergan seriously when he clearly shifts the norms of the usual trivial comparison-work to the control of a genetic

¹⁴ See the conclusion of his essay "Healing and Creating in History."

¹⁵ In the next essay I shall place our present instance of destructiveness in a fuller context. But I insist that the present focusing is a key strategy to "fruit to be borne." *Method in Theology*, 355.

¹⁶ *Insight*, 423.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 647.

sequence of prior efforts to understanding whatever. See *Insight*, the two paragraphs on the turn of pages: (i) 603-4 (ii) 609-10. And yes, indeed, there is some jump-start needed, but it seems sadly decades away.

Perhaps there is some good in placing before you my bluntness in the final note (28) of my last essay of the “Tincture of System” series. *Tinctures of System 6*: “ $\{M(W_3)^{0\Phi T}\}^4$ Converging the Fifth Column: I Crest my Case.” They are indeed, happily, my last note and my last series: it is time to halt my long climbing scattered efforts to share Lonergan’s 29-yr-old yearnings of *Essay on Fundamental Sociology* and venture into practical and disturbing nudges – LOL – such as this.

So here you are, “a measure of needed bluntness” that Crowe talked about in 1964 (*Spirit as Inquiry*, 27):

Tinctures 6, note 28:

A final note in this essay, and in my essaying of 60 years. That I ended in an aesthetic mode probably provides some with an excuse to ignore my efforts. So, let me end with some dull remarkable barking remarkings.

It seems to me that Lonergan’s disciples have little imagining of what he was reaching for. The issue is and was a science of progress. The solution is and was a critical creatively effective genetics of the global thinkings and doings regarding that progress. My regular analogy of growing a sunflower is obvious. Since my audience is primarily Christian, I narrow my musings here to Christian theology. Jesus arrives at the fullness of time—we could count to three and had the linguistic signs to contextualize such an achievement—but we were comfortably settled into truncated consciousness and a fussy optimism about initial meanings. Let’s skip the mystical stuff here and think of that trail as it messed on through the centuries of patristics and councils in the putterings of generations “whose consciousness is unmitigated by any tincture of systematic meaning” (*Method in Theology*, 32: see also 278, 309), to a large extent, and clearly untheoretic in delineating the message that was and is in Jesus’ minding. In later centuries the putterings delineated that minding, well, in what we can recognize as the usual narrow-minded tracts of theology that *de facto* narrow the minds of theologians and their victim-students and “the Cargo” (See [Vignette 19](#)).

Lonergan’s search for an answer “Do you know His Kingdom?” (*Essay in Fundamental Sociology*, conclusion) finally bubbled out beyond the contemporary imagination in the key problem of locating the genetics of that Kingdom in an effective cumulatively redemptive, science: we are leaping now, remarkably and markedly, over the second

paragraph of *Method in Theology*, chapter one: the bold spiriting that has misled and shrunk us through more than two millennia. The answer comes in Lonergan’s meaning of *Comparison* when it is fully, and genetically, sifted up out of the program of *Method in Theology* 250. What is to emerge eventually is a mind-boggling fresh effective genetic perspective on the ongoing Son-flowering of the Kingdom—including its eschatological realization. Further, the treatise Lonergan heralded in *Insight* 763–4 is to be not only the heart of the entire enterprise of theology, but also its basis in the teaching of theology. I think back now to the stupid messing of my first year theology (1961–2) titled “On the Church,” all the more startling in that I had come from the real world of lecturing graduate physics and mathematics. Pause for a shot at imagining the rest of a degree in Christian theology with such a new mind-boggling scientific beginning, “outshining everything since the rise of Christianity” (“Questionnaire on Philosophy,” *CWL* 17, 353).

My claim, expressed already in the beginning of the second paragraph, but now with some backing, is that most likely you just cannot effectively have that shot, a shot at breaking the locked neuromolecular patterns in your cranium. The “some backing” is just a few hundred of my words jostled onto the surface of those fixed sick patterns. Lonergan studies will continue in the ruts of the past until a “not numerous center” (*CWL* 4, 245) becomes numerous enough to think their way effectively out of present gross global—billionaires or buttons—misery. “We are not there yet” (*For a New Political Economy*, 306), nor will there be a jumpstart towards “effective intervention in history” (*Phenomenology and Logic*, 306) until Faithfilled fantasy effectively replaces the junkyard that is present religious reflection and prayer. That fantasy would lift the symbolic heuristic, $\{\mathbf{M} (\mathbf{W}_3)^{\mathbf{0}\Phi\mathbf{T}}\}^4$, into humble effective climbing. But in what sense can I thus “Crest my Case”? As far as present theologians are concerned, my Case’s Crest flags a life of dead see strolls.

And now on we go again to the piece of resistance to progress, the referee’s report.

This submission reports about an invitation to several people, to participate in a panel at the 2018 West Coast Method Institute on the topic identified in the title. This report is then followed by reflections on four important passages from *Method in Theology*. There is no record of which panelists declined the invitation, or which accepted, nor what those who accepted the invitation had to say. McShane’s own reflections on the four passages call upon the reader to enter more seriously into the reading of those passages,

and to become shocked by the poverty of our present situation. The call is intensified by references to visionaries from Vancouver Sikhs to Nadia Boulanger and Vaslav Nijinsky and George Eliot among others. If I had to classify the submission, I would say it is prophetic, fully aware [sic] of the great irony in ever “classifying” anything as prophetic. In this prophetic mode, the submission includes a not too subtle rebuke to “jump-start a repentance from ‘academic disciplines’ Lonergan studies” with a footnote to the phrase “academic disciplines” from *Method in Theology*.

I have no doubt of the intellectual and spiritual poverty of our present condition. I have no doubt that in the future times when Lonergan’s work has been accepted and effected a reorientation of academic disciplines, things will be much different, and we would hope, much better. But at present those involved in “Lonergan studies” – those doing the best they can to learn from one another, whether housed in academic departments or not – need insights as much if not more than prophetic exhortations. *MJLS* does the best it can to meet the prior need. While I do not doubt the need for prophetic exhortations, *MJLS* is not the venue for this submission.

The editors of *MJLS* do take seriously the issue raised in this submission about the state of the academic disciplines. They are considering steps that *MJLS* might take to address this concern more seriously in the near future.

Where am I, are we, to go with this trivial ramble? My immediate answer is that we are to go to the fifth section of Lonergan’s chapter on Dialectic in *Method in Theology*, to that passage at the beginning of the first of these essays, the passage I have named *Lonergan’s 1833 Overture*. We? You and I and the referee and Byrne and the *Method* Board. The difficulty with that move is twofold. First, it moves us into an explanatory mode, a lift towards the X that would explain The Light in a full engineering fashion. And ho—“satire laughs at, humor laughs with”¹⁸—

we are not there yet. And for society to progress to that or any other goal it must fulfill one condition. It cannot be a titanothero, a beast with a three-ton body and a ten-ounce brain. It must not direct its main effort to the ordinary final product of standard of living but to the overhead product of cultural implements. It must not glory in its widening, in adding industry to industry, and feeding the soul of man with an abundant demand for labor. It must glory in its

¹⁸ *Insight*, 649.

deepening, in the pure deepening that adds to aggregate leisure, to liberate many entirely and all increasingly to the field of cultural activities.¹⁹

The second difficulty is the difficulty that weaves right through this series of essays. Byrne, the board, the co-editor, and the referee are massively reluctant to become involved. So, as I noted in my reply to Byrne, those last three lines in the referee's chitchat are something of a joke. They do not take seriously the present immoral shambles of the academy. They show the absence of any idea why Lonergan moves through paragraph two of *Method in Theology's* first chapter, from the bourgeois view of science to its muddling imitation in "academic disciplines," among which resides cozily their own work of refereeing. "McShane's own reflections on the four passages call upon the reader to enter more seriously into the reading of those passages, and to become shocked by the poverty of our present situation." Did McShane's reflection call upon the referee? Not at all. So the referee dodged reading the four passages of *Method in Theology* as he and the entire community have dodged reading them since 1972, and thus that community carries on like a titanothore. So much for Lonergan's advice of 1942: the overhead final product of the cultural implement, staring out at their blinkered eyes from *Method in Theology*, is dodged in favor of business as usual, the ordinary final product of a standard of academic living that is in disastrous collusion with the sick mean mindings of present powers' kneeling at the altar of lobbied bureaucracies.

The point is evident: a bureaucracy can imitate but it cannot create, for the spirit bloweth where it listeth and all new ideas are ridiculous until the contrary is demonstrated by individual initiative, adapted by creative imagination, carried by personal risk. Chaos can create, but it creates anything at all; it thinks of poison gas as well as anesthetics, and it uses both; it devises financial mechanisms that float brilliant booms and suffer incomprehensible slumps; it builds the wealth of cities and their slums; it inveighs against evil but it has to throw all civilization into the pot of experiment before it can discover whether another novelty will merit a blessing or a curse; it debauches the mind with a Babel of contradictions and leaves the will a prey to fantasy and fanaticism.²⁰

¹⁹ *For a New Political Economy*, CWL 21, 20.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

This, alas, is only the beginnings of my serious musings about the mess, admitted with, I would say, a shadow of dishonesty by the referee: “I have no doubt of the intellectual and spiritual poverty of our present condition.” Neither, oddly, did he doubt that the “*Assembly*”²¹ of my article into the cycle of “cumulative and progressive results”²² did not suit the committed poverty of the *Method Journal*’s “academic disciplines”²³ approach. But then he has no idea of either of the role of “*Assembly*” in the functional cycling of the new science, nor has he any idea of the root causes of sick “academic disciplines” like present theology.

Perhaps I should leave my 1833 musings at that for the moment. Does it not give you a chance and a nudge to ask just what the role of *Assembly* is to be in this “third way ... difficult and laborious”²⁴ that Lonergan found, a way that cuts the academic disciplines approach off at the groin or the ground, depending how low you wish to go in satire and humor. We can take up these difficult prophecies of Lonergan in the sixth essay. Meantime, we need to gather the musings and problem of the original *Seeding Global Collaboration* group, that core of the small minority of Lonergan students who sense the need for the “*scienza nuova*” described brilliantly in the four passages that are the topic of my rejected paper.

²¹ The turn-of-the-page word of page 249 onto the new leaf, 250, of the original *Method*.

²² *Method in Theology*, 4.

²³ Ending page 3 of the original *Method in Theology*.

²⁴ *Method in Theology*, 4.