

August 4, 2018

Public Challenging *Method* Board V

The Referee's Romp and Pomp

Back I go to my comment to Byrne about that arrogant and ignorant piece of assessment. As I invite you to circle round this stuff, this providential instance of Lonerganesque muddling, I think of Lonergan writing about “**The Aim of This Supplement**”¹ at the beginning of his Preface to *The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*. “It was because of teaching obligations that I was led to write this and not because I had nothing better to do.”² Better, indeed, that I climb on in the world of *The Interior Lighthouse*, nudging some few in this generation, and *The* growing community in the millennia to come, towards what I might call *Engineering Light*.³ Yet the teaching obligation is part of that nudging at present. Might the small group represented by the volume *Seeding Global Collaboration* and I somehow teach genuine reading to the brutally mislead readers of the works of Lonergan? My final seventh essay will be a shot at that: not a final shot—for there is life in the old dog yet, and you have his e-mail: pmcshane@shaw.ca—but perhaps a new common beginning that we can all share. Indeed, I think of the providence of this beginning with the poise of the *Method* Board as fermenting providentially towards that beginning, a public outcry beginning, at the beginning of *Method in Theology*.

So I go on now shortly to repeat my comments to Byrne regarding the referee's assessment. Shortly: because it seems to me wise to nudge you to import another context to this reading. You may take it that the context is one of nudging you to an openness to

¹ The bold-faced title of his Preface in *The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, CWL 7, at page 3. I like to think of these seven essays of mine as a bold-faced supplement to sixty years of going against the tide.

² *The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, CWL 7, 3.

³ See note 1 of the final essay.

a conversion to authentic reading. So I point you, as I did before,⁴ to that page in *Method* that talks of embarrassing doctrines. The embarrassment takes on massive proportions in the next essay, but here please poise yourself, as it were, in a distant viewing of The Tower of Able and The Interior Lighthouse that I associate with it and read subject-as-subject⁵ Lonergan's nudge. "Accordingly, while the unconverted may have no real apprehension of what it is to be converted, at least they have in doctrines the evidence both that there is something lacking in themselves and that they need to pray for illumination and to seek instruction."⁶ Might even, glory be to God, the referee, join the praying and the seeking?

Well, here you are again, never stepping into the same paragraph twice:

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 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.

In brighter moments I think that a jump-start could occur in the year 2020: a 2020 vision of shockingly new "institutions, roles tasks."⁷ But as I plod in with the memory of a half century of rejected nudgings, I wittily think of Jeremiah heading into the battered

⁴ See note 1 of the previous essay.

⁵ See *Phenomenology and Logic*, CWL 18, 226, 314-17, 360-65.

⁶ *Method in Theology*, 299.

⁷ *Method in Theology*, 48: in the spread of words. Eventually that spread will be luminously read within the context of what I call "the Crest": see [Tinctures of System 6](#), " $\{\mathbf{M}(\mathbf{W}_3)^{\mathbf{0}\Phi\mathbf{T}}\}^4$ ": Converging the Fifth Column: I Crest my Case." In these final three essays there are fantasy nudges towards the millennia-long trek to layers of adequate equations, diagrams, situation room correlations, dynamic topologies, that are required if we are rightly to claim "theology possesses" (*Insight*, 766) in a manner that brings Isaiah's dream (2:2-4) into tightening Bell-curve practicality.

garden of Eden after the death of Abel making pronouncements about the law of the inner human.

Having got this far in the present essay, there came the providence of a goodly reaction from a respected colleague, which nudges me to be briefer and crisper in this essay. Here you have an honest reaction to the first of my essays, which may well be your own.

I have just read your challenge of 7/27. I understand that you are frustrated by the weaknesses of Lonergan Studies. But I don't understand your strategy for remedying the situation, if indeed you have one. You're not apparently implementing BL's prescription to advance the positions; rather, you simply carp about the inadequacy of current work. Nor do you or your preferred cadre of fellow-carppers actually do what you all say we should all be doing.

Yes, my colleague does understand my frustration, but, perhaps, only to the extent of a personal witnessing of weaknesses. My witnessing of the weaknesses blossomed out of my work prior to facing Lonergan's theology in 1956, and led me to find it in massive discontinuity with current work. The witnessing would have to take larger and formal form were I to face into the full task of the three objectifications named—in what I call *Lonergan's 1833 Overture*—as essential and normative to the work of dialectic. THAT would be “implementing BL's prescription to advance the positions,” meeting my colleague's desire. But let us re-read the previous sentence in the plea: “I don't understand your strategy for remedying the situation, if indeed you have one.” The full strategy belongs to the full witnessing, and presenting a slice of that is the task of my next essay. But let me home in on two of the strategies that I have been airing for some time. There is the strategy of taking seriously Lonergan's triple-objectification norm that concludes Section 5 of the *Method* chapter on Dialectic. I could hardly be more blunt about that. It was the central message of the rejected article. Then there is the strategy of admitting effectively our failure to take seriously Lonergan's norms for scientific interpretation, symbolized by the references to *Insight* given above. “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.” But is the jump-start a decade away? One of my

“fellow-carpers” actually does a decent nudging to jump-start us out of the mess of, e.g., comparing X and Y. But he has gained little attention.⁸

And what of my colleague’s claim, “You’re not apparently implementing BL’s prescription to advance the positions; rather, you simply carp about the inadequacy of current work.” I have been steadily implementing Lonergan’s prescription since the end of the 1950s. I have received little more attention from the 99% than Bill Zanardi, despite my much longer run.

Do I simply carp about the inadequacy of present work? The panel-article is quite clear, backed by abundant previous work, on the disgusting misreading of key sections of *Method in Theology*. Identifying bluntly the present work on Lonergan, and work since the 1940’s, as brutally identifiable by Lonergan’s pointers regarding *haute vulgarization*: that is not simple carping.⁹ And do I have to write a book about the manner in which Lonergan studies, from the start, was trapped in the patterns of individual, group, and general bias, so easily misread about in the sixth and seventh chapters of *Insight* when the bridge to the reading is dodged: “a natural bridge over which we may advance from our examination of science to an examination of common sense.”¹⁰

This all leads me to a final comment on the pomp of the referee, a comment that shakes up my remarks, in my reply to Byrne, regarding “prophecy.” No, my work is not prophetic, even though I joke about wandering around like an early Jeremiah after the death of Abel. My work has been a long, multi-volume series of pointings to the powerful heuristic of Lonergan. As you’ll see when you swing into the next essay, I was daftly

⁸ I am referring to the series of volumes brought forth by William Zanardi: William Zanardi, *The New Comparative Interpretation: A Primer*. 2nd, revised edition (Austin: Forty Acres Press, 2014); Clayton Shoppa and William Zanardi, *Cracking the Case: Exercises in the New Comparative Interpretation* (Austin: Forty Acres Press, 2014); Clayton Shoppa and William Zanardi, *What Is an Environment? A Study in the New Comparative Interpretation* (Austin: Forty Acres Press, 2015); William Zanardi, *The Education of Liberty: Fantasies about the Future* (Austin: Forty Acres Press, 2016); R.G. Aaron Mundine, Clayton Shoppa and William Zanardi, *Comparing Philosophical Methods: A Way Forward* (Austin: Forty Acres Press, 2017); William Zanardi, *Rescuing Ethics from Philosophers* (Austin: Forty Acres Press, 2018).

⁹ The invitation is quite clear: to bring to bear on one’s own life what Lonergan has to say, in *Philosophical and Theological Papers, 1958–1964*, CWL 6, about *haute vulgarization*.

¹⁰ *Insight*, 163: it is the beginning of chapter 5, “Space and Time.”

tempted to continue such pointing in the sixth essay by sketching the power of his heuristic suggestions about diagramming.¹¹ But I restrained myself, especially as my elderly immune system putters along in a pneumonic state under doctor's orders.

¹¹ The final text of the next essay is Lonergan's key normative comment on diagramming.