

THIRD OBJECTIFICATIONS: A FOURTH COMING FIFTH COLUMN

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.¹

These words from the 30-year-old Lonergan throw not a little light on those first three paragraphs of *Method in Theology*. For me, at least, and for the few who have been with me in our submitting, in this past year especially, to a bit of dialectic. But I am not getting through to what I may call *The Lonergan Community*. "What on earth is to be done?"² That question is posed by Lonergan near the conclusion of his letter. He goes on to push a little in his ending: "shall the matter be left to providence to solve according to its own plan; or do you consider that providence intends to use my superiors as conscious agents in the furtherance of what it has already done?"

Then under his signature, with an arrow pointing to the word *furtherance*, he writes, "I can make all sorts of suggestions on this. You have only to indicate the kind you would listen to."

Lonergan's letter was not well received. Should I write a ten-page letter to the conscious agents of Lonergan studies? Alas, I have in fact tried that more than once in the past decade, with no positive effect.³ After his question "What on earth is to be

¹ I quote, in patchy fashion, from Lonergan's letter of January 22nd 1935, to his Jesuit Superior. The letter is reproduced fully in Pierrot Lambert and Philip McShane, *Bernard Lonergan. His Life and Leading Ideas*, Axial Publishing, 2010, at pages 151–2.

² *Ibid.*, 154.

³ As I climb on towards us **seizing** and being seized by a fuller heuristic while at the same time tuning into the shabby goings-on of the conferences and publications of 2018, it becomes sadly clear to me that there is a root rejection in Lonerganism of Lonergan's fundamental poise expressed at the end of my initial quotation. He was convinced that there was a solution to the

done?” he wrote “I have done all that can be done” and I can modestly make a similar claim. This is not the place to ramble on about my goings-on since I first waved functional collaboration in musicology under the noses of my colleagues in the International Florida Conference.⁴ Best that I restrict myself to these past few months, beginning with a panel presentation at the Los Angeles gathering of April.

That panel is represented by a paper written in the autumn of 2017, now available to you,⁵ but I do not ask you to face into it. Nor do I ask you to venture into the work that flowed from that failed presentation. Yes, a failed presentation: things continue as they have in previous decades. So I resolved after the meeting to write a sequence of more than 100 Vignettes circling the same problem, the same text named *Loneragan’s 1833 Overture*.⁶ I wisely cut the sequence down to 24,⁷ and added the previous four *Tinctures of Systematics*, which, with the backup of recent work, presents a solid contribution to the third and final objectification pitched at us by Loneragan at the end of that Overture. What next? This fifth Tincture points us towards the emergence of a Fifth Column in

problem of evil: they do not share that conviction nor that hope. It is massively illuminating to see and seize this through a meshing of the array of words on *Method* 48 with the culture of academic disciplines that strangles contemporary “bourgeois” intellectualism. The academic-discipline poise has a hidden operative premise that there is no solution to the question of “object and objective,” of “terminal value” (*Method*, 48, array: see the paragraph on p. 49). **Seizing** this operatively, however, is a matter of generating a countervailing poise that solves heuristically the problem of possession expressed in *Insight’s* Epilogue: “theology possesses a twofold relevance to empirical human science.” (*Insight*, 766). See notes 1, 2 and 20 of the following essay.

⁴ The paper was the second of two papers presented there, the first being on botany. The two papers are available as the first and second chapters of *The Shaping of the Foundations*, available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.org/published-books>.

⁵ “[A Paradigmatic Panel for \(Advanced\) Students \(of Religion\)](#)” (available at <http://www.philipmcshane.org/website-articles>) in fact was submitted to *Method: Journal of Loneragan Studies* and rejected (after seven months of?): but that is another story, added as an appendix to the essay.

⁶ Lines 18 to 33 of page 250 of *Method in Theology*.

⁷ There were various options for that sequence. So, for instance, I could have taken up details of topics dealt with at the Los Angeles conference where the panel occurred, and then moved to the presentations of other conferences of this and later years. But this would be tiresome and ineffective work. I have to hand conference schedules and papers of this past year, and sadly read both with a sense that these parallel bad pre-Faraday work flowing forth after Maxwell’s achievements. How can I be so harsh, so arrogant? Back I go to Fred Crowe of 1964: “is there not room for a measure of bluntness at this stage?” *Spirit as Inquiry*, 27.

Lonergeran discipleship. It exists minusculely already in the handful of present sympathetic readers and collaborators. But now, as the plea of Lonergan's letter, there is the matter of furtherance. "I can make all sorts of suggestions on this. You have only to indicate the kind you would listen to." Such a sorting of suggestions would gain as little attention as Lonergan's letter did. So I cut back to a suggestion to myself and my few readers.

We need to invite guests to forthcome, to come fourth: "cajoling or forcing attention."⁸ The invitation is to join casually in this third objectification, which at present consists of the *Assembly*⁹ of the quotation above from Lonergan's 1935 letter and my plea of these past few months, with a focus on the central part of it. We'll get to the heart of it in the next essay.¹⁰ But for the moment, pause: might not even casual visitor notice the shocking similarity of Lonergan's addressing his superior in that 1935 quotation and his first three paragraphs of *Method in Theology* of thirty years later?¹¹ A bold bourgeois spirit led us astray.

The catch here is that the suggestion is to myself and my few committed readers. We need to, not find visitors, but hunt and hound those stuck in the rut of Aristotelian Lonerganism, or being led by the knows-all into its sick academic disciplined offspring. I am like Michael Collins, a hundred years ago, sending out a few willing assassins against the empire's shenanigans.

I invite you, my assassins and my visitors, to muse over the bridge in my title, "Fourth Comings."

I am thinking of you being introduced to the fourth stage of meaning and coming in and forward and forth to it as the nun in my first year class of physics came forward to my sketching of elements of a fourth year course. As perhaps you came forth to Lonergan's discomfoting suggestion that "to speak of the dynamic state of being in love

⁸ *Insight* 423, line 4.

⁹ *Method in Theology*, the final word of page 249.

¹⁰ The point here is towards your effective reading of "we'll get to": might I say that I aim to get us to the crest of the hill, but now *crest* means only a mapscape of an illusion of a deceptively-seen top.

¹¹ The paper mentioned in note 5 above is probably the easiest introduction to the problem here of reading adequately the first three paragraphs of *Method in Theology*.

with God pertains to the stage of meaning when the world of interiority has been made the explicit grounds of the world of theory and of common sense.”¹² Perhaps: but more likely the reading of that by you previously was a none’s story. And pause now in shock: the world of the fourth stage is a stretch beyond that speaking and listening. It is the world of a listening speaking of Claspings Cherishing Cauling Craving Christing¹³ that is at Om in “Christ’s prayer of Jesus: ‘. . . may they all be one . . .’ (John 17, 21).”¹⁴

I cut short my seeding of a long trek of you and me: I am looking to a break upwards, a lift off from, your actual present sniff of transcendence that is a predominant differentiation of human consciousness. The break upwards, the lift off, is towards a higher eliminative meshing that is to probe a composition and a composure that is to weave us ontically and phyletically beyond a set opposition. “In the history of mankind the predominant differentiation of consciousness has set in opposition and in mutual enrichment the realms of common sense and of transcendence.”¹⁵

But the break upwards, the lift off, I ask of you, assassins and victims, is only a quite elementary, commonsense gripping of, groping in, a sentence—quoted above at note 1—of Lonergan’s letter of 1935: “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.” That willingness is a huge repentance that “overcomes evil both by meeting it with good and by using it to reinforce the good. Thus good will wills the order of the universe, and so it wills with that order’s dynamic joy and zeal.”¹⁶ It lines

¹² *Method in Theology*, 107. This is quite a humbling shock to commonsense theology. There is the demand of moving into a meta-explanatory poise in theology, but paradoxically the speaking from such a poise, in positive *haute vulgarization*, can and will lift commonsense consciousness to a new radiance of religiosity.

¹³ See note 11 of the following essay. The five “Cs” relate to Lonergan’s proposal (*CWL* 12, *The Triune God. Systematics*, 470–73) regarding absolutely supernatural entities, but the pointing here is towards an interiority of Selves and selves contemplative explanatoriness of the Notional Acts and our notional acts.

¹⁴ *Method in Theology*, 367. This is the final scriptural pointing of the book.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 266. The final words of the chapter on Dialectic.

¹⁶ *Insight*, 722. This is a key page of the book that needs to be ingested in Lighthouse fashion. I commented on it relevantly in “*Insight and the Interior Lighthouse*,” *Divyadaan. Journal of Philosophy and Education* 28/2 (2017).

you up with the homebound salmon, the rutting elephant, the sexy flea,¹⁷ the Virginia Creeper. It thus may bring you to see and seize that present Lonergan studies is way way way, almost unimaginably way off the mark, the cauling, the craving. So, still, stilly, the cargo pants.¹⁸

Might that seizure move you into a Fifth Column?

¹⁷ Think of John Donne's poem, *The Flea*.

¹⁸ See [Vignette 19](#), "The Cargo Pants."