

CONFERENCES, GATHERINGS, PAPERS, POISES

I continue my disconcerting—or concerting?—turn in this series, in these three final—yes, 16, 17 and 18—*Vignettes*, with a fresh cut-down offer on the subject that was my previously intended project. That project could have carried forwards through the results of the ongoing flow of “academic disciplines” presentations and gatherings. I live in the memory of conferences and their papers of this year, with the predominance of the poise that I and Lonergan reject. We are on the edge of further conferences in the Americas and elsewhere in June: yes, stuff indeed to weave into the Assembly through hundreds of further Vignettes.

But my effort seems to point only towards a monologue, and the turn that came to mind as I weaved through *Vignette 24* was that, paradoxically, I could end the monologue by ending the series abruptly this month.

So, part of that abruptness is to recall only a single conference: the one in Concordia University organized by Sean McEvenue and Ben Meyer that eventually was published under their editorship: *Lonergan’s Hermeneutics. Its Development and Application*.¹ My own contribution is there² and, like the others, we failed as a group to face our topic.³ Is that failure—to take Lonergan’s hermeneutics of *Insight 17.3* seriously—manifest to you at this stage? Sadly, I think not, but you could surprise me: please please, perhaps even nudged by the very pessimism that haunts this Vignette, to the character of which I returned after finishing *Vignette 24* and finding it luminously appropriate to end my projected long series of Vignettes there. My thinking not, my clear pessimism, was freshened at that stage in a way that I shall

¹ The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, 1989.

² I was replying to the paper in the volume by Robert Doran. My performative reply, however, is not in the volume, yet it is now central to my push for a scientific theology, philosophy, futurology. The morning of my presentation there bubbled forth the version of W₃ that I have been presenting since then in various ways. I sketched it fully to the gathering. I have kept it unchanged, but lifted it into fuller contexts such as that given in [Vignette 9](#).

³ I comment on the result of the conference on pages 21–24 of [Cantover 9](#), “Position, Poisition, Protopossession.”

write about in the conclusion of [*Vignette 18*](#), which is the conclusion to my effort in this series.

The series could have gone on and on, round and about the topics to which my title above points. But it is clear to me now that my abrupt ending of it, and my passing it on as a closed package of *Assembly* to the next generations of Lonergan students, will be associated—in a millennium or ten—with a better statistics of the eventual success of what I dare to call Lonergan’s brutal canon of complete explanation: brutal in that it is a shocking and thorough stand against the sick, irresponsible, even arrogant, confinement to common sense of religious consciousness.

Is that not a brutal suggestion? Yet it surges from me in these final days of my Vignette effort in a shock of appreciation of the slum state of both ontic and phylectic progress in these long dark axial millennia.

I could well have halted there but it seemed best to finish by illustrating the slum-dwelling in a precise, compact, and elusive way. First, a compact question that “the cargo pants” globally: Where are we going? Then a compact answer from me, a jotting that I presented as one of 21 ‘starts’ in the first of two *Festschriften* celebrating the sixtieth year of the publication of *Insight*. The 20th start faced the problem of answering the question: Where are we going? I mention in that start the final lecture given by Karl Rahner in which he expresses his regret regarding the neglect of eschatological issues. No point in my elaborating on my struggle with those issues over the past decades. A footnote will do.⁴ The fancy takes me to present my sketching in the mood of Fermat scribbling on a margin that he had a neat solution to the problem of his famous Last Theorem. So, what follows is more than a marginal scribble: it is a few pages of pointers. Will the pointers eventually catch the attention of some serious puzzlers about human destiny? Well, let us muse over that at the end of the next Vignette.

⁴ The search involved battling with Thomas in various zones since my first relevant puzzling of 1958: what did he mean by “*possibilita esse et non esse*” in his “third way” (Ia., q. 2., a.3). Some pointers on this in the end-notes to [*Cantover 19*](#). There is the obvious effort of *The Everlasting Joy of Being Human* (Axial Publishing, 2013) but that was a more dialectic dabbling, ending however in the key final note 86, where Thomas reduces the everlasting living to humanity. A massive problem that hovered over all this is: What is minimal embodiment? Well, over to you and the next generations: the hints are in my scribbles.

So here you are: McShane's Last Theorem. My audacity in thus naming the search for the character⁵ of human destiny will surely offend: but that is an offensiveness that I have already written about. When that theorem emerges my name can be forgotten: it will be a foundational possession in the enriching cycling of our home-going, and its positive *haute vulgarization* will, paradoxically, lead global humanity to an effective care of our pilgrim ways.

20. Eschaton

My second last start simply invites us to ask, with full, if limping, contemplative W₃ seriousness, where is this kindly light called *Insight* leading, what is our best thinking of “terminal value” in the display of *Method in Theology* page 48?⁶ I enlarge on this start here merely by quoting two previous footnotes: [A] note 6 of [*Disputing Quests* 1](#), “The Disputed Location of Disputing Quests”; [B] note 24 of [*Cantower* 33](#), “Lonergan and Axial Bridges.”

[A] Here it seems useful to simply add some scribbles I sent to a colleague in September 2016 regarding a follow up on the essay, [*HOW 11*](#), “Into the Neurodynamics of Jesus.”

Various Beginnings, BL text from Rome. (see beginning of my *The Everlasting Joy of Being Human*.) 2002 *Cantower* project + Rahner’s lecture (*Theol Stud.* 2000, 3-15: lack of eschatology. See [*Cantower* 33](#), note 24.). Your beginning now perhaps, questions of terminal value and enlightenment and happiness within broad cosmic destiny. Paul Davies *Last Three Minutes*. Terminal values: MIT 51. Relate to *Insight* 18, 1.3. Relate to *CWL* 10 TED, source of MIT 48 spread. Relate to contemplative climb [*HOW 13*](#), and of course, [*HOW 11*](#). Back to *Cantower* project, to *Cantowers* round 117. On to *Contra Gentiles* IV, 83-88, re Thomas messing with old cosmology; [I leave you to think out (i) 83, no food, O.K.; sex? Think out neurodynamics; (ii) the judgment stuff and the punishment stuff, towards a rescuing of all]:

⁵ I need hardly, at this stage, revisit the *Magna Moralia*. Nor is there need to mention Lonergan’s efforts, especially in his Latin works, to glimpses that character of the characters of the pilgrimage and the achievement. Might you muse over the shocking parallel with the group-analyses of Wiles 110-page effort at solving Fermat’s Last Theorem?

⁶ Recall the reference to Schweitzer in note 1 above, with the issue there of a geohistorical grip on the climb to the meaning of finitude. I am not recommending a plunge into those puzzlings of Schweitzer but his confused brooding on eschatology needs sublating into the full heuristics I am recommending. He nudges towards “the recognition of the eschatological character of the Preaching of Jesus and of the Teaching of Paul, though it may pose the question of the Hellenization of Christianity” (*The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, ix). It poses the question of the contemplative science of the destiny of Christianity.

on to 97, however: door-opening, “the entire bodily creation will be changed”, + “no plants or animals”. *CG* IV, 97 {5}, which leads on to endnote 86, p. 125 of of EJBH. [Neurodynamics of memories of pets to be handled.] Cosmic negentropy and neurodynamics of the resurrected Jesus, “that he might fill all things” Eph 4¹⁰, quoted in *CG* IV, 87 re ‘place’: articles that follow need note 13, page 13 of *CWL* 18). And add energy = material prima. Two useful numbers 10⁸⁰ and 10²⁵, recalling Eddington number of cosmic protons: 1.5 by 10⁷⁹; then number in brain. More re neurodynamics and chemo-needs of ‘isolated’ brain, e.g. oxygen, spinal fluid, etc. [Google: “is it possible to keep a brain alive detached from its body?” but the question needs a much broader context]. Crown of the positive Anthropocenic. “With these eyes” (Job 19:26–7), *CG* IV 84 {14} but put in the broad context of the previous brackets: full contemplative achievement of “so it comes about” (*Insight*, 537, 11 lines from end): existential dimension of ‘seen’ street molecules e.g. in autos, tied in with *Insight* 722, end lines, sublated into Notional Act of Clasping, etc. [enlarging bottom of W₃ and also meaning of “+” at top]. The destiny of these molecules of mine. Kim Noble pointer: 50+ year old woman/painter with 100+ personalities. Jesus: 100 billion+ persons in the Eschaton. Again, memory problem e.g. re Old Jerusalem included in New Jerusalem e.g. the remembering of the donkey of Palm Sunday. The integrally-minded in the non-Noah’s ark (cf. *CWL* 18) of divine minding: but Trinitarian. The core holding contemplative climb up through the 26 places in chapter 19 + on through q.27 *Summa*. Relate to “God not an object,” [MIT, 342] and connect to “originating values and terminal values can coincide” (MIT 51). The whole perspective give a mighty lift to the ‘characterization’ of the historical causality of Christ (see *Allure*, 244, note 36: add note 44 on page 246, an everlasting ‘Hello’), to St. Paul’s and St. Patrick’s perspective on Christ’s presence, to Crowe’s efforts in *History of the Word*, to Sacrament of the Present Moment stuff. Also think of the new twist on ‘this is my body’. Finally back to re-read *Insight* 544, line 13: “the universe can bring forth its own unity in the concentrated form of a single intelligent view”. Think all out in the contemplatext of you being one of the secondary intelligibles of the 14th place, [*Insight*, 683], you being thus practically Thought of lovingly, in the subjectivities of God, as thinking here-now the full Eschaton that includes the positive opposite of God, energy, as meshed with God through Incarnation, Sonflower-blossomed.

I am talking here of the tower reach, functional prayerful cycling, but there seems increasingly [e.g. science + fictions like *Voyager* etc.] a pastoral-outreach culture-context. The whole thing gives a quite new and rich perspective on *Romans* 8's groaning cosmos. All the molecules etc since the big bang yearning for, bent on being in, the minding of the Second Person and that Person + 100 billion persons in a final dynamic of Agonbite of InWithTo. [but now the contemplative problem of [HOW 13](#) weaving into common sense: this seems to me to be the central problem of present culture, in and out of the Tower of Theology: adult growth in Kataphatic contemplation: see the appendices in *Allure*.]. Can give a popular better grip on ‘where we are all going’, a grip on the sensed world, an optimism about the ‘salvaging’—Christoffering, [recall Christoffel tensor stuff: *Lindsay and Margenau*, 362] of physic-chemical. Pet problem and ‘garden’ context have to be handle: need for virtual reality stuff and neurochemistry of memory.

[B] Shortly after I wrote the above⁷ Rahner gave his last address, recently presented in English (Karl Rahner, “Experiences of a Catholic Theologian,” *Theological Studies*, 61 (2000) 3–15). He spoke with humble realism about the state of theology, its relation to the sciences and to questions of eschatology. The points he raised have preoccupied me in the two decades since, and I would hope to bring the questions of science and eschatology into a fuller focus gradually—it is a central aim of these *Cantowers*. I return to issues of Rahner’s eschatological reflections briefly in [Cantower XXXIX](#), but I would draw attention here to this area as a clear instance of the failure of theology to take up the challenge of fundamental Christian questions in the context of modern astronomy. “It needs to be said why and how this Jesus is the only One to whom we can entrust ourselves in life and in death. What kind of answer can we give to this question?” (*Ibid.* 7).

⁷ I was writing about “courageous searching for a post-medieval theology.” [Cantower 33](#) “Lonergan and Axial Bridges”(available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.org/cantowers>). It contains the article I wrote for the periodical *Compass* in 1984 to celebrate Lonergan’s 80th birthday. He died a few weeks before the birthday.