

**MAYDAY! MAYDAY! MAYDAY!**

I ended the previous essay with a question: “The question is, why do you—if you do, and to the degree that you do—find the two sentences he wrote in 1953 no more demanding in your reading than Lonergan’s 1934 magnificent non-proof?”<sup>1</sup>

The question was and is, obviously, to you and, yes, freshly to me, and the quality of the answer depends on how much time you and I have to spare this May to weave the question round the layers of our existential selves. In 1972 I wrote, in the second paragraph of a little book introducing Lonergan’s thought: “What then is Lonergan getting at? The uncomfortable answer is that Lonergan is getting at you and me.” I was in Toronto at the time, regularly in the Bayview Avenue Regis College. Crowe had requested the Introduction, and Lonergan checked it. He was quite tickled by that beginning. Such a style was just not in his blood. It led to comic aspects of his writing. In Latin there was the regular hoot for the astute reader, (let’s take page 134 in two texts) “quibus perspectis, iam elucet”<sup>2</sup> or “rem ergo facillimam aggredimur”<sup>3</sup> and in *Insight* he could type “we are now familiar with the notion of empirical residue” or “the answer is easily reached,” when the royal *we* and the easy reacher was the owner of the busy typing fingers. Was he relying on the readers wit and humor to “dissolve honored pretense”?<sup>4</sup> Rather he was leaping on in terrible solitude to envisage for

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<sup>1</sup> The magnificent non-proof is quoted below at note 14. The two sentences referred to above are the beginning of Lonergan’s dense paragraph on genetic hermeneutics, at the end of *Insight* 609, that is relevant to solving his problem of a treatise on the mystical body (*Insight*, 763–4) in a full meaning of the word *Comparison* (*Method*, 250). The two sentences are: “The explanatory differentiation of the protean notion of being involves three elements. First there is the genetic sequence in which insights are gradually accumulated by man.” The answer to the question posed above and at the end of the previous Vignette will only be gradually accumulated in the Vignettes to follow.

<sup>2</sup> *The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, CWL 7, top of 134. Translated as “in view of this, it is now clear.”

<sup>3</sup> *The Triune God: Systematics*, CWL 12, 134. Translated as “we are therefore attempting something very easy.”

<sup>4</sup> *Insight*, 649.

himself the salvaging of the Christian message from its long axial decline, but also integrally committed to changing that message and its message of human frailty and greed.

The commitment appears best in his writing and his letters of the mid-1930s, and it blossomed into a graduate text, the first of an anticipated two volumes, in the early-1950s.<sup>5</sup> Yes, *Insight* is a graduate text. See: I have an *Assembly*<sup>6</sup> of a book and, sliding past the tasks of the top of *Method* 250, I am positioning myself, but casually, in the triple objectification required by *Loneragan's 1833 Overture*. And in that positioning I would have us all cry, "Mayday! Mayday! Mayday!"

But the "all" is fantasyland at present. I would like a reasonably sized group to poise effectively with me in mayday mood. Might this be my lucky year, and God's? I was foolishly optimistic when I sat in the Bodleian Library just fifty years ago and bubbled with the light and delight of a needed functional collaboration in the study and practice of music. The Florida Conference of 1970 did not share that light or delight. But perhaps the trouble was it being graduate stuff, and indeed my trouble for the decades in between bears that stamp.

So, surprise, surprise, I take now a turn for the better, me being the better betting on an effected effective following. Yes, I mean you, undergraduate or teenaged you; (old folks over thirty are also welcome), and yes, I take a surprising stand, picking up on the first words Loneragan said to me, in 1966, on the topic of functional collaboration: "well, its easy: you just double the structure." He went on then, his eight fingers touching in the electric air between us, to sketch what eventually turned up in *Gregorianum* 1969 as "Functional Specialties."

Now here I wish us to go another way, a way not initially "a third way, . . . difficult and laborious,"<sup>7</sup> but a way as obvious as creative primitive fruit gathering.

I have quoted just now the third paragraph of *Method*, and perhaps it helps here to place ourselves in the context of the first paragraph of the book. Think of us as primitive fruit-

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<sup>5</sup> Loneragan was shifted to Rome in 1953, cutting off his project. "Hence, if I can possibly do it, I must try to finish and arrange for the first part of my work before my departure. It would be entitled, *Insight*, and the remainder be named, *Faith*, or *Insight and Faith*. This leaves me with a long row to hoe yet." (Loneragan, in a letter to Eric O'Connor of July 23, 1952. Produced here as typed, without italics for titles.)

<sup>6</sup> *Method*, 249, last word.

<sup>7</sup> *Method*, 4.

gatherers, bringing home handfuls of fruit. Then some masterly lady among us picks up a shell, a half-coconut, whatever: and all and “one can go on.”<sup>8</sup> The problem lurking in our tale is to let ‘what’ loose in any culture, to be relevantly inventive, to arrive at “a resolute and effective intervention in this historical process”<sup>9</sup> of gathering fruit; “fruit to be borne”:<sup>10</sup> that is the realism. What does and did the group need? It needed a creative minority, even a single person, that creatively encourages the “double the structure” of fruit-gathering.<sup>11</sup>

Are we re-reading Lonergan’s remark to me of 1966: “Well, its easy: you just double the structure”? The word *structure* now refers to genetic effectiveness—whatever that means. Recall now, with pause and poise, my suggested question regarding an amendment to any constitution, “do you view humanity as possibly maturing—in some serious way—or just messing along between good and evil, whatever you think they are?”<sup>12</sup> “Whatever you think

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<sup>8</sup> *Method 287*: I quote a key nasty paragraph where Lonergan points out that if you really are an incarnation of the meaning of *Insight*, you’ll be ready to write the first half of *Method*, “without tears” (*The Constitution of Christ*, CWL 7, 151). We are obviously trekking differently.

<sup>9</sup> *Phenomenology and Logic*, CWL 18, 306.

<sup>10</sup> *Method in Theology*, 355: the sublation of implementation’s meaning in external relating. Internal to the specialties implementation has a range of different meanings.

<sup>11</sup> The central creative encouragement needed at present is, however, not in the doubling of structure but in the honest creative acknowledgement of 60 years of dodging Lonergan’s challenge to lift interpretation into an effective scientific style. The challenge is summarily expressed in the paragraph that turns the page 609–10 in *Insight*. The failure to meet the challenge is brutally articulated in lines 2–10 of *Insight* 604. There he concludes (lines 10–12) by talking optimistically of a minor resistance but it is, within Lonerganism, a seemingly unshakable poise. In the recent WCMI Conference (April 19–21) I pointed to the need to think out analogies that could help us out of the mess. The old television show, *House*, illustrates a caring pattern of interpretations that does not totter round various opinions on the patient’s treatment but sifts forward the best perspective on recovery and genetic progress. We benefit from parallels in plant care. There has been developed, even in this early period of the science of botany, a decent perspective on cultivation, sifted out of legions of opinions and treatments that have a geohistory. New suggestions are compared to that geohistorically-selected perspective, not to each other. The plant we are dealing with in philosophy is a little ground-breaking unknown Plant X, called *Cosmopolis* (“in the first instance an X,” *Insight*, 263). In 9000 years it will be a towering global achievement, like the great 9000 year-old Swedish tree. Kurt Cobain was born, in northwest Washington, a few miles from a shabby village called *Cosmopolis*. He deserved, as we all do, a context different from that “life unlivable” (*Topics in Education*, CWL 10, 232). As I recently moved up through the villages and urbias of California, Oregon, and Washington, I puzzled over the greed and idiocy that has them as they are. Changing that global idiocy is our task in philosophy. We need to pick up effectively on the optimism of *Isaiah 2: 2–4*, so that humanity comes to weave its meaning forward within a global village of *Cosmopolis*, leaving behind the sickness of our long, axial industrious war-haunted evolution.

<sup>12</sup> I have presented the question in various places in the past decade, most recently in *Profit: The Stupid View of President Donald Trump*, (Axial Publishing, 2016, available on Amazon), p. 85.

they are” is echoed in “whatever that means,” but the whatever meaning must be sufficiently shared to be effective. *Effective* for the fruit gatherers would mean doubling the seasonal fruit-collection. But have we not now a very simple fundamental meaning of “doubling the structure?” The simple meaning is “make a difference” between past and future: and we easily make the addition of “make a creative effective difference.” But the ease may be only in our minds. Are there voices in the group chanting, “we gather fruit with bare hands; it is our sacred way”? And then there may be others in the group who see that, with longer hours gathering, we can trade with other tribes, fruit for perfumes, and so build palaces and pyramids to our greed. And on and on, till we arrive millennia later at the industrious revolutions of these past centuries that are increasingly detected as decline—whatever that means.

But I am straying. Let’s stay with that first paragraph of *Method*, and wonder at the ease of our trickery. What is that trickery? We are heading towards skipping the second paragraph of *Method* and revising the third paragraph. We are slipping around the “bolder spirits” and sliding past “academic disciplines.”<sup>13</sup>

I think now of those days of the summer of 1966 as Lonergan recovered from his lung operation of 1965 and we shared poolside times, swapping jokes. But on his mind was the problem of beginning that I summarize in his question to me, “What am I to do? I can’t put all of *Insight* into *Method*!” I had no worthwhile suggestion: I let him pace before me and talk his talk in his little room. Much later it seemed to me that I could have suggested—made “a resolute and possibly effective interventional in this historical process”—a let-it-be attitude: Don’t write the book: let “Functional Specialties” point the way.

Only in this past decade have I pushed towards this other way, the way of dodging *Insight*—which is, in any case, such an evolutionary sports-wear, and has in fact been dodged by all cultures—and starting with my cute little reading of “Well, its easy: you just double the structure,” where now I am thinking about a mind-doubling that seriously and effectively names past and future in a way that gives some slim meaning to progress. Here—LOL—you may enjoy thinking of me as simply finding my way into an initial meaning of Lonergan’s First Theorem about progress on which I centered attention in the previous Vignette. Let’s

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<sup>13</sup> The quoted words are from the first and last lines of that second paragraph on page 3 of *Method*.

repeat it here, and savor it in the context of fruit gathering, inventing the wheel and the weir, inventing the “bench” of a “dummy” of exchange.

But what is progress?

It is a matter of intellect. Intellect is understanding of sensible data. It is the guiding form, statistically effective, of human action transforming the data of life. Finally, it is a fresh intellectual synthesis understanding the new situation created by the old intellectual form and providing a statistically effective form for the next cycle of human action that will bring forth in reality the incompleteness of the later act of intellect by setting it new problems.<sup>14</sup>

I have given, for the moment, enough nudges to our 1833 poise. There are still 209 Vignettes in the offing. Besides, I want to get back to my title and make a few crisp points about what I would like you to do. Note, in passing, that this was not the explicit poise of Lonergan in *Insight*, nor indeed in *Method*. But there is no doubt that he wished you to do something. I don't think that, e.g., he would back off from Fred Crowe's ending of his gallant book on *Theology of the Christian Word*.<sup>15</sup>

When you have a mountain to move, and only a spade and wheelbarrow to work with, you can either sit on your hands or you can put spade to earth and move the first sod. Some day, if others have the same idea, the mountain will be moved – and restructured. Some day too, I hope, theology will be restructured according to a method that operates on the level of our times; this book is meant to be a spadeful of earth in the moving of that mountain.

So I halt here, offering three pointings, three “maydays.” There is the obvious rescue-need meaning of “mayday, mayday, mayday.”<sup>16</sup> Let us think now of the original French, “help me”!

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<sup>14</sup> Lonergan, “Essay in Fundamental Sociology,” in Michael Shute, *Lonergan's Early Economic Research*, University of Toronto Press, 2010, 20.

<sup>15</sup> F.E. Crowe, *Theology of the Christian Word. A Study in History*, Paulist Press, 1978. I quote immediately from p. 149. The place of the book in the battle out of “effete” (*Method*, 99) Lonerganism requires serious detection. I recall amusing Fred around that time by suggesting that, if something is worth doing, it is worth doing badly. My own musings over decades about the book. See [Cantover 38](#), “Functional History,” section 4, where I focus on the doing-badly. Later I detected a positiveness in it of research: see, [Humus 8](#): Crowe's *Theology of the Christian Word*; [Humus 9](#): Frederick Crowe and Ourselves as Researchers; [Humus 10](#): Fr. Crowe's “The Christian Message Begins”; [Humus 11](#): “The Word of God As Truth”; [Humus 12](#): Crowe: Possibilities of Methodical Collaboration.

<sup>16</sup> The distress signal was invented by senior Officer Frederick Stanley Mockford at Croydon Airport in London in 1923, the French *m'aider*, to be repeated thrice to avoid mistakes.

[1] There is the m'aidier—even unattended to in our miboxes<sup>17</sup>—that is the scream of present culture in our crippled lives, described in relative blandness and ineffectiveness in *Insight*, but with more bite in *Topics in Education*: “Philosophers for at least two centuries, through doctrines on politics, economics, education, and through ever further doctrines, have been trying to remake man and have done not a little to make human life unlivable.”<sup>18</sup>

[2] There is the m'aidier that is the entire drive of this crazy sixteen-year project. The drive is towards getting you to take seriously, even if only in popular form, the challenge of getting to grips with your ontic and phyletic poise and somehow articulating it to and with others.

[3] But there is the third m'aidier that is my sharing in the longings of Lonergan and Crowe. To me now it seems clear that we need the emergence of global groupings that would be effective in intervening in history, “painstaking enough to work out one by one the transitions to be made, strong enough to refuse half measures and insist on complete solutions even though it has to wait.”<sup>19</sup>

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I interpose a break-line, thinking that while it is good for me to halt here, you also might halt here, a May morning quarter back. So, let us take another turn round the three Maydays.

[1] The scream of present culture is not heard without a prolonged venture into The Interior Lighthouse. [2] The seriousness of Lonergan’s m'aidier expressed in *Lonergan’s 1833 Overture* has been disgracefully dodged for the past forty years. [3] The groupings required in following him have thus been dodged and replaced, yes, by splinterings and driftings.<sup>20</sup> Local conferences huddle round old ways, pushing papers, footnoting Lonergan.<sup>21</sup> What hope have

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<sup>17</sup> I make this insertion as a discomfoting strategy of alerting you to an unreality of present Lonerganesque reading, where “the self of our self-affirmation seems quite different from one’s actual self” (*Insight*, 411). Mibox is the topic of chapter 5, “The Inside-Out of Critical Realism” of [\*Wealth of Self and Wealth of Nations. Self-axis of the Great Ascent\*](#). Mibox is the topic of Vignette 22. Might the essay help dodge a Catch 22?

<sup>18</sup> *Topics in Education*, CWL 10, 232.

<sup>19</sup> The concluding words of the final article in *Collection*: “Dimensions of Meaning,” CWL 4, 245.

<sup>20</sup> I am thinking here of Lonergan’s musing both about Husserl’s views of splintering (*Phenomenology and Logic*, CWL 18, 252–3) and about drifting (see the index of CWL 18, under *drifting*).

<sup>21</sup> I cannot help recalling the farcical gathering in Toronto for the centennial of Lonergan’s birth in 2004. I was not invited, but went along since I was on my way to Dublin after a death in the family.

I that this little Vignette would give anyone pause, would halt you now in your fruit-gathering and wool-gathering?

Another break-line below, please, that might make the last sign typed in that paragraph, “?”, blossom in you, oh so slowly, into a local luminous evolutionary recovery of molecular whatting in this long sick settled decline that, at present, swallows Lonergan. Might we replace the swallow by respect for a Windhover, “striding / High there, how he hung upon the rein of a wimpling wing / In his ecstasy!”<sup>22</sup>

Recall, recollect, reconnoiter, recompose our beginnings.

The emergence of humanity is the evolutionary achievement of sowing whatamong the cosmic molecules. The sown what infests the clustered molecular patterns behind and above your eyes, between your ears, lifting areas—named by humans like Brocca and Wernicke—towards patterned noise making that in English is marked by “so what?”<sup>23</sup>

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The important “fruit to be borne”<sup>24</sup> in mind, to be bred in psyche, as you double the structure with sufficient lucidity [2] in seizing the past [1] and rising to the future [3] is that I am not talking about the distant structures sketched in *Insight*, but of something like the primitive leap toward concretizing the bright idea of the wheel.

Perhaps it helps to think of the Lonergan’s odd illustration of a concrete judgment of fact.

Suppose a man return from work to his tidy home and to find the windows smashed, smoke in the air, and water on the floor. Suppose him to make the extremely restrained judgment of fact, ‘something happened.’ The question is, not whether he was right, but how he reached his judgment.<sup>25</sup>

Now shift your minding into my ballpark, or even into your mibox.

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A paper every half hour: think of Lonergan’s quip to me, “lectures went out with Gutenberg.” I walked around Dublin for a week, musing about the sick event, and wrote there an earlier mayday cry: *Quodlibet* 8: “The Dialectic of My Town: *Ma Vlast*.” It is a far better m’aider cry than this present simple one, though now I have an integral fix on strategies I have mused over for decades, like the strategy of backfiring from an FS<sub>1</sub> intervention to generate an FS<sub>7</sub> creative leap.

<sup>22</sup> G.M. Hopkins, *The Windhover*, lines 3–5.

<sup>23</sup> The first paragraph of chapter one, “Sow What,” of *The Allure of the Compelling Genius of History*.

<sup>24</sup> *Method*, 355.

<sup>25</sup> *Insight*, 306–7.

Suppose a woman turn from her tidy home-work in philosophy and theology to find—a creative jolt—that that work lacks windows, sends smoke into the air, waters down her loneliness. Suppose her to make the extremely restrained judgment of value, ‘something needs to be done.’ The question is, not how she reached her judgment, but whether she moves right on to “a resolute and effective intervention in this historical process.”

That relevant intervention is to be, in my 1833 view, just a beginning: an effective move towards effective groupings about problems.<sup>26</sup> I have my own ideas of such groupings in relation to local education, economics, preaching, scripture reading, converging religions, etc, etc, but we can vignette forwards about these. And I think of my inventing a failed group, SGEME, a few decades ago: might it now take its place in a Markov sphere of local groupings? Further, what I would have you think about is that the intervention might best work in split-personality mode. The intervention need have no connection with the present academic life, on or out of Lonerganism, that generates survival dollars. It has to do with your creativity, grouped or not, and our scattered and battered lonelinesses finding that either we think, in creative resistance, as we move from the past to the future or we continue to let gobshites think for us.<sup>27</sup> But you may have to earn your keep amidst the settled destructiveness and effeteness of the gobshitology of present economics, politics, intellectualism.

Lonerganism is included in that viewing of intellectualism. Of course, there are odd women and men in that loose community struggling to make a concrete difference, but the main thrust is towards a safe isolationism—“big frogs in little ponds”<sup>28</sup>—that does not face Lonergan’s challenge of implementation,<sup>29</sup> that cannot take seriously his hearty appeal to

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<sup>26</sup> It will take collaborative chat over time to seed this humbler version of functional collaboration, a collaboration that looks initially to be a skipping from the first to the eighth specialty. I shall enlarge further on that in the next hundred or so of the Vignettes. But might there not occur some collaborative chat in 2018?

<sup>27</sup> No offense to The Gobshites, a Boston band who would claim that they are “the Only Folk ‘N’ Irish Band That Matters.” *Gobshite* is Irish slang for a person of poor judgment and poor character. The radical opposite of the person envisaged at the start of the *Magna Moralia*. Return now to reading Lonergan’s quiet discussion of decline: we live in victimhood of gobshiteology.

<sup>28</sup> A remark of Lonergan, Easter 1961, chatting in Dublin about the situation in theology.

<sup>29</sup> This is a huge topic, a massive business of leaping to luminosity about the “bolder spirits” (*Method*, paragraph 2, line 1) who missed the primitive clue. The bolder spirits’ spirits haunt us all in the negative Anthropocene. Recall Fred Crowe’s failure to index *implementation* in the early *Insight*, and the shabby inclusions in the present edition. Fred and I joked about indices over the decades

supplement his “First Theorem”<sup>30</sup> with a global networking of groups that would become the heart of the Body of Christ.

What is necessary is a cosmopolis that is neither class nor state, that stands above all their claims, that cuts them down to size, that is founded on the native detachment and disinterestedness of every intelligence, that commands man’s first allegiance, that implements itself primarily through that allegiance, that is too universal to be bribed, too impalpable to be force, too effective to be ignored.<sup>31</sup>

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of our work together. My own very shabby index of *Method* was done in a month (December, 1971) with pen and paper, but even with the best technology it would have been shabby. I have not checked the new index—nor was I consulted about it—but I must presume that it has benefited both from technology and from comprehension. That new edition will be a topic of later vignettes. But I would make a startling suggestion now to stir your psyche towards leaning forward, good will hunting in the “order of the universe” (*Insight*, 722, last lines) so that “it wills with that order’s dynamic joy and zeal” (*ibid.*) So let you now, in your Interior Lighthouse, your mibox, revisit the definition of metaphysics at the bottom of *Insight* 416. Pause over the word “conception.” Does it mean for you, already-in-here-**nowhere**, an explanation leaning toweringly forward, with implementation in its molecular heart? The leaning was in the heart of Lonergan—witness his First Theorem—but was his minding conception of conception haunted by the Condom-mine “Blithe Spirits” of the bolder spirits? (Noel Coward’s play focuses on Charles Condomine conducting a séance, hoping to gather material for his next book. But I do not think of Lonergan in those terms: only of the majority of his present disciples).

<sup>30</sup> Quoted above at note 14.

<sup>31</sup> *Insight*, 263.