

Endvisaging Situations

I had been musing for some days about this follow-up of the invitation to share the problem of adequately, effectively, symbolizing the full heuristics of situations when it dawned on me that it had best be done in the context brought forth by my colleagues' effort to do an exercise within Lonergan's brilliant description of how to do dialectics.¹ The expression of the dawning was and is helped forward in various strange ways, not the least of which was a fantasy-stirring during a lengthy session in an emergency ward. But the oddest piece of my effort here comes from listening, earlier that same day, to Leonard Bernstein speaking of readings of the text of Bach's D minor concerto prior to his conducting Glen Gould's stunning performance. A main point was Bernstein's noting—and illustrating on piano—how the text was not well marked, was open to a range of readings. The eccentric Gould went his own brilliant textless chatty way.² Bernstein, of course, did not look at the text as he conducted: might I just say that, like Gould, he had it in him, neurodynamically cherished?

So I decided to begin here with the Assembly of a single piece of a substantial work of Lonergan, written in a minor key. Here you have it:

The comprehension of everything in a unified whole can be either formal or virtual. It is virtual when one is habitually able to answer readily and without difficulty, or at least 'without tears,' a whole series of questions right up to the last 'why?' Formal comprehension, however, cannot take place without a construct of some sort. In this life we are able to understand something only by turning to phantasm; but in larger and more complex questions it is impossible to have suitable phantasm unless the imagination is aided by some sort of diagram. Thus, if we want to have a comprehensive grasp of everything in a unified whole, we shall have to construct a diagram in which are symbolically represented all the various elements of the question along with the connections between them.³

Have you read the text? Have you read the text in context, going Bach as it were, and then looking forward in fantasy to future performances? We may think and talk, as we move along, in terms of others, but now we are alone together, you and I, in a strange double-think and double-

¹ *Method in Theology*, section 4, "Dialectic: the Structure" of chapter 10, "Dialectic." This is the mind-turning crisis section of the book: it weaves round the page-turning crisis paragraph of *Insight* 609–10. On my colleagues' efforts see note 11 of [Æcornomics 17](#).

² I must note that the inspiration of my musical twists in this essay came from my wife, the Reverend Sally, who—she has a talent for effective intervention—led me to the talk about and playing of a movement of Bach's Keyboard Concerto no 1 on D minor, which is available at: https://youtu.be/9ZX_XCYokQo. Sally, too, opened the door to my neurodynamic tuning into the consciousnesses of the Gibb brothers: the Bee Gees.

³ CWL 7, *The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, 151.

take.⁴ We turn page 249 of *Method* (1972): but now do a leap⁵ to read the text of lines 18 to 33 of the page, a late brilliant Overture of Lonergan that I have called *Lonergan's 1833 Overture*. Have you read it, then read it Bach to Bach, with my assembled text from *The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, infesting your neurodynamics with the psychology of Christ, of Bach, of Lonergan, perhaps even of Teresa of Avila: but the latter is the tune and tuner of our next song?

“Horizon” is the first word of the 1833 Overture. Would “neurodynamic infestation” be a better nudge towards the required self-identification? Off I go—the leisured hospital musing lifting all this to a new level for me, as well as this morning’s minions⁶—into the two first objectifications that Lonergan requires.

Yes, I was fortunately craniobone-infested prior to my first reading of the Assembled text. I had a teenage madness of music. How does one read “out loud”⁷ the page-marks of Chopin’s four *Ballades*? “Such speech, however, is found clear and accurate and explanatory only by those that have done their apprenticeship.”⁸ Listen to Glen Gould *handling* Bach and recall Bernstein’s preliminary comment about being infested by the whole detailed structure to finger this bar or that. “This comprehension of the whole can be either formal or virtual.” Hark to Gould’s doings, with Bernstein steering the orchestra, in the Bach Concerto. “Virtual”? Virtuoso: and certainly “without tears.”⁹ But did they not already share with Bach the “formal comprehension,” even weaving beyond him? Do you feel slightly out of your depth? Cheer up, things get worse!

To the festive infestations of teen music I add the providential total absorption of the mid-fifties. The year—1956—that Lonergan typed my *Assembled* 134 words I was in the symbolic world of tensor equations, trying to get a grip on the simplest aspects of space and time. This was my world.¹⁰ A decade later, I was grappling with the thoroughly non-systematic dynamic of

⁴ “Double-think” comes from Orwell’s *1984*. Can you twist with me round my doublings, double reading this little essay?

⁵ “Out-loud” like Glen Gould’s fingers as leaning towers (see the next note), a nudging of him and us towards being engineers of “fruit to be borne” (*Method in Theology*, 355).

⁶ Might you have in you a little “Dionysian” (*CWL 10, Topics in Education*, 40, line 1) echo of Hopkin’s *Windhover*, the hawk-eyed bird of history flying on “wimpling wing” “*To Christ our Lord*” (the subtitle of the poem). Might your “heart in hiding stir” beyond the present “steady air” of dementia? (See below notes 20, 21 and 22).

⁷ “Out-loud” like Glen Gould’s fingers as leaning towers, a nudging of him and us towards being engineers of “fruit to be borne” (*Method in Theology*, 355). So: revisit notes 6, 20, 21, and 22.

⁸ *Method in Theology*, 260. The beginning of a shocking paragraph pointing to the potential “to discover oneself in oneself.”

⁹ I recall Lonergan’s text of *CWL 7, The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, 151.

¹⁰ This is my challenge, and Lonergan’s, to the contemporary dementia of general bias. A context is “A Dominant Context of Lonergan’s Life,” chapter 10 of Pierrot Lambert and Philip McShane, *Bernard Lonergan. His Life and Leading Ideas*, Axial Publishing, 2010. See notes 21 and 22 below.

finitude and symbolized the height of my climb in my use of F. M. Fisher,¹¹ who seeks to produce ‘a rather grandiose picture of history.’ He defines a state of nature as a point in m-space, m being the number of independent variables excluding calendar time. He introduces time as n discrete moments since the creation of the world, and proposes some kind of multiple Markov matrix as giving the required picture of history. ‘The typical element of the tensor, then—say $M_{i_1 i_2 i_3 \dots i_{n+1}}$, is defined as the probability that Nature will be in the state i_1 at time t_1 given that at time $t-n$ to $t-1$ she was successively in states i_{n+1}, i_n, \dots, i_3 and i_2 .’¹² Reduction of the number of variables is possible by distinguishing states only on the basis of certain subsets, and so, for example, ‘Toynbee’s *Study of History* can be regarded as an attempt at a great Markovian reduction of the historical process to a very few variables and very large subdivisions and the consequent description of the process by a multiple Markov tensor of manageable rank.’¹³

It would be a massive task to follow on into my modifications of Fisher’s effort, so let’s just say that here ends my first objectification, an objectification that bears witness of my complete acceptance of the stand expressed in the *Assembled* 134 words of Lonergan.

What of the second objectification? Unbriefly, there is [Economics 5](#), “Structuring the Reach towards the Future.”¹⁴ Very briefly, there is my metadoctrine of generous engineering: if it is to be true that “theology possesses,”¹⁵ thus becoming properly

regina scientiarum, not merely a constitutional monarch – you do no wrong because you can do nothing at all! – but an effective monarch that exerts a real influence within the fields of the sciences, then as a philosophy, it will have to be something fixed. But it cannot have the fixity of a monolith, one big stone, solid and homogeneous throughout. Its fixity has to be the fixity of an invariant form in which the sciences are included; but what are included are not fixed sciences but sciences free to develop.¹⁶

My quotations call in Lonergan as my ally here, and my comments in the footnotes should help a little towards sensing the shock of the massive lift of theology and philosophy.

¹¹ F. M. Fisher, “On the Analysis of History and the interdependence of the Social Sciences,” *Phil. Sc.*, 27 (1960), 150.

¹² *Ibid.*, 149.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 156.

¹⁴ I would note that it was the climb up through my four articles, in *Divyadaan* 30/1 (2019), “Religious Faith Seeding the Positive Anthropocene Age,” on the active convergence of religions—a convergence to be increasingly mediated by local Interior Lighthouse work—that pushed me forward to a precise heuristic of the missing possession mentioned in *Insight*. It is, you must surely suspect, a massive project of these next 7 millennia: a heuristic that would effectively and generously engineer the defective heuristics of all sciences and arts, including the lonely realities of their referents. What I have “in mind” is a symbolic panoply that would fill volumes, fill future Tower neurodynamics. Let me just pause over the simplest science, represented by the thousand page volume *The Road to Reality: A Complete Guide to the Laws of the Universe*, by Roger Penrose (Vintage Books, 2005), a gallant but truncated thinker. How might detraction effect his symbolisms (scan the book for the abundance)? And remember that the book is about Penrose as well as particles. Add Penrose on Gödel: see chapter 1, “Gödel’s Theorem,” of [Lonergan’s Standard Model of Effective Global Inquiry](#).

¹⁵ *Insight*, 766, line 29.

¹⁶ *CWL* 18, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 126. Note the inclusion of analogy, *ibid.*, 126.

But my sense of these past centuries of history's mess is that you, its victim, are not up to sensing the shock. And here we find ourselves—if only I had your first and second objectifications!—pitched into Lonergan's brilliantly subtle and discomfiting “final objectification.”

A little earlier today I had a refreshingly honest positioning re diagrams in response to my appeal of [Ecconomics 14](#). “Are you kidding, Phil? :) I don't even know what “full topological heuristic of situations” really means let alone try diagramming it!! :)” But it is a position bent on learning, not a None's Story business. I recall the positioning of a leading Lonergan scholar writing to me in the 1970s, which perhaps I should keep anonymous for the present. It was an honest reaction to the formulae in the bottom half of [Wealth of Self and Wealth of Nations](#), page 106. “Do we really have to learn this mathematics to do methodology?” Thirty years later it remained for him a None's Story. It remains thus for almost the entire corpus of Lonergan studies. How, one may ask—thinking again of effective performance and of Bernstein's baton and Gould's fingers—can we modify the ethos of decent performance, the “fruit to be borne” in history? Best leave that question for the adventure of [Ecconomics 17](#). Meantime, it is useful to ask, in [Ecconomics 16](#), where Teresa of Avila would find herself in this 1833 Overture.

But it is best, and perhaps even effective with some few, to close with a blunt musical parallel for a lengthy mesh and mess of the present third objectification where the opposition is silent. I returned to Leonard Bernstein yesterday and soaked in his might-I-say frenzied conducting of Gustav Mahler's First Symphony. On my mind, of course, was the third movement, where Mahler weaves the wee melody *Frère Jacques*, yes, into the full problem of the effective genetics of symphonic reaching. The silent opposition to my push for an effective theology of the symphony of Jesus is like a closed group chanting the old ditty and passing it on to disciples, corruptively, in various modes of polyphony and rounds. The result is a centuries-long mismanagement of the mission of the Incarnate Word. The narrow horizon seeded globally by “the arrogance of omniscient commonsense”¹⁷ meshed with stupidity and greed stays in control of history. How are we to seed the leap to the positive Anthropocene? It is not enough to have Field Faith singing old commonsense ditties.

If those that live within a narrow horizon are all ‘ahoy’ for changing the historical process while those whose horizon is coincident with the field retire into an ivory tower and exert no influence upon society at large, then we are in the situation where the people who can do the most harm are doing it and the people who could do most good are not.¹⁸

¹⁷ CWL 17, *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980*, “Questionnaire on Philosophy: Response,” 370.

¹⁸ CWL 18, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 306–7.

This song of Lonergan rings no morning or warning bell. There is no stirring at all in the entire frog-tribe¹⁹ to envisage situations.²⁰ So I conclude, singing—but not hopefully²¹—to Jack and Jill in their little dementia of meaning:²²

*Frère Jacques, Frère Jacques,
Dormez-vous? Dormez-vous?
Sonnez les matines! Sonnez les matines!*

¹⁹ Still fresh in my mind is Lonergan's edgy remark in Dublin, Easter 1961, about "big frogs in little ponds."

²⁰ So we come to the reach of the title, symbolized by thinking both phyletically and ontically of The Leaning Tower of Able that is in all of us and each of us in potentially "Dionysian" (*Topics in Education*, 40, line 1) "personal relations" (*Method in Theology*, the third line of the display of words: the troublemakers' home-line of ongoing progress).

²¹ Early in life I found myself to be a long-term optimist. In my seventies it matured into a "yes I said yes I will Yes" (The end words of Joyce's *Ulysses*) to my suggested question: "Do you view humanity as possibly maturing—in some serious way—or just messing along between good and evil, whatever you think they are?" We are at present in the negative period of the Anthropocene, not seeding my long-term hope. And in that context I see little hope of present Lonergan studies rising to the challenge of [Ecconomics 3](#), "A Common Quest Manifesto." Bring in the context of the next note. You and "Jack and Jill are not characters out of a social worker's casebook. (They) are neither unperceptive, nor stupid, nor silly. If they were, acquaintance would not blossom into friendship, nor friendship into intimacy" (*Collection*, 219). But that does not mean, I would claim, that you have not read chapter seven of *Insight* in crude and cruel and destructive dementia.

²² Jack and Jill are characters in the essay "Cognitional Structure" (*CWL 4, Collection*: see 216, 219), the third last of the essays there, followed by "*Existence and Aggiornamento*" and "Dimensions of Meaning." The "dementia of meaning" I wish you to focus is not, however, a sophisticated position on realism. It is the dominant rot- and rat- and rut- and writ- and rhet-talk of general bias and its political playground, *haute vulgarization* (see *CWL 6*, 121, 155).