

July 27, 2018

Public Challenging *Method* Board I

Let me be crisply clear. This is not some little feud: this new series relates to necessary paradigm shifts in Lonergan studies. Certainly you can get the impression of a little feud between *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* and myself regarding my rejected article, "[A Paradigmatic Panel for \(Advanced\) Students \(of Religion\)](#),"¹ if you home in on my correspondence with *MJLS* that appears in the appendix to the article. But to get at the heart of the present matter, the center of Lonerganism's ills, then you should turn to the four questions raised at note 6 of the rejected article, where the problem of taking seriously Lonergan's clear norms for dialectic progress is cast more broadly.² The focus here is on the second of the questions. But it is best to quote now the relevant piece from Lonergan in the surround of my comments there.

I am about to launch us saskwhats into the eye of the storm, into what's effort to read itself in and into a companionship of mysterious selves: surely this Lonergan wind will shake your read? Should I now reverently and relevantly-for-me type in the four movements of this Lonergan 1833 Overture?

Horizons.

The results, accordingly, will not be uniform. But the source of this lack of uniformity will be brought out into the open when each investigator proceeds to distinguish between positions, which are compatible with intellectual, moral and religious conversion and, on the other hand, counterpositions, which are incompatible either with intellectual, or with moral, or with religious conversion.

¹ The essay is available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.org/website-articles>.

² Here are the questions posed there. The second question points to the strategy presented by Lonergan in lines 18–33 of *Method in Theology*.

- (1) Where are we in the story of our venture?
- (2) What are our strategies of answering that or any question regarding our story?
- (3) What is the place of serious understanding in our story?
- (4) How effective is our story-making?

A further objectification of horizons is obtained when each investigator operates on the materials by indicating the view that would result from developing what he regarded as positions and be reversing what he has regarded as counterpositions.

There is a final objectification of horizon when the results of the foregoing process are themselves regarded as material, when they are assembled, completed, compared, reduced, classified, selected, when positions and counterpositions are distinguished, when positions are developed and counterpositions reversed.³

I pause for a day here: what might I add to this shocking, brilliant, innovative, invitation? What might you add, you both in solitary ontic self-searching and in some community of phyletic aspiration, “a process of self-constitution occurring within worldwide society”?⁴ My reach is both to the distant heights of dialectic confrontation that is to mediate “cumulative and progressive results”⁵ and to various struggling muddled present gatherings willing to scratch their way out of today’s grave discourse.⁶ And because of this spread of situations envisaged in my pause and my paws, I see that brevity or silence is now appropriate on the issue and the issuing of the subtle details of this self-plumbing challenge pitched at us in these 16 central lines of Lonergan’s book.

What is at issue? What is at issue. The issue, your issuing, is getting some sense, what-show, what’s-how, of the slow climb to the effective control of scientific meaning.⁷

Here I pause to indicate my reluctance to move on into a new series. I claimed note 28 of [Tinctures of Systems 6](#) to be my final say. But I cannot in conscience let this opportunity go. I can too easily see Lonerganism drifting on for decades if not for centuries peddling a shabby deceitful version of the genius’s massive discontinuing from and of present God-talk and man-talk and man-walk.

³ *Method in Theology*, 250. I would note that I have considered this piece of text in a number of contexts. For example, there is the context of chapter 12, “Dialectic and the Notion of Being” in *The Allure of the Compelling Genius of History*, where the text is reproduced on pages 145–46. My most recent, more comprehensive treatment of the meaning of the text is “The Coming Convergence of World Responsiveness,” *Diyadaan: Journal of Philosophy and Education* 29 (2018).

⁴ *Method in Theology*, 363.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 4 and 5.

⁶ Recall the end of the paragraph at note 30, above, [i.e. in the article] about Newton’s grave.

⁷ “[A Paradigmatic Panel Dynamic for \(Advanced\) Students \(of Religion\)](#),” at pages 6–7.

I am making the text, quoted above from the end of section 5 of *Method in Theology*'s chapter on Dialectic, the bone of my contention. Its positive importance is without doubt nor is the importance of its dodging for 46 years by the readers of *Method in Theology*.⁸ I am not well versed in those decades of dodging but I recall at present only three people who paused seriously over the section. There is Terry Tekippe's 1983 muddled effort which I no longer have to hand. Then there is Robert Doran's sad pause over the text, finding it pointing to a ninth functional specialty: a shocking misreading.⁹ Then there is Pat Byrne's effort in his massive venture *The Ethics of Achievement*. In his seven pages on the topic,¹⁰ Pat does mention how Dialectic "brings about personal encounters between scholars and those who came before them."¹¹ He refers directly to the text when, a little later, he notes: "Lonergan further proposes that this process¹² will be accelerated when the results of dialecticians themselves become the inputs for subsequent exercises of Dialectic by later scholars."¹³ But in these pages he shows that he just does not get

⁸ I refer you here to Patrick Brown's reflections both on the importance and on the neglect of the section. The paper, [FuSe 14B](#), "Some notes on the Development of *Method*, 250," was presented in 2011 at the West Coast Methods Institute at Loyola Marymount University and is available online at: <http://www.philipmcschane.org/fuse>. Brown's reflections are placed in a fuller context in my recent book, which weaves *Insight* and *Method* together chapter by chapter, *The Allure of the Compelling Genius of History: Teaching Yong Humans Humanity and Hope*, (Vancouver: Axial Publishing, 2016). See there chapter 12, "Dialectic and the Notion of Being."

⁹ See *The Trinity in History: A Theology of the Divine Missions*, Volume 1: Missions and Processions (University of Toronto Press, 2012), 111ff. I have considered Doran's mistaken poise in some detail in the essays [Question 27](#), "Approaching Doran's Trinitarian Theology," [Question 30](#), "The Trinity in History," [Disputing Quests 2](#), "Projects of Fr. Bob Doran," [Disputing Quests 14](#), "Doran versus Wilkins," [Disputing Quests 16](#), "Detailed Disputes: Doran." The Question essays are available at: <http://www.philipmcschane.org/questions-and-answers>; the Disputing Quests essays are available at: <http://www.philipmcschane.org/disputing-quests>.

¹⁰ *The Ethics of Achievement: Lonergan's Foundations for Ethics*, University of Toronto Press, 2016, 435–42.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 439, last lines.

¹² "A self-scrutiny that can lead to a new understanding of oneself and one's destiny" is the end of Byrne's quotation immediately before this, from *Method in Theology*, 253.

¹³ *Ethics of Achievement*, 441, lines 7–9.

Lonergan's discomfoting identification of the three grim objectifications mentioned in that key text.¹⁴ Surely it is time for us all to face that grim discomfort together.

My hope is that my challenge will lead us to the face off —“at pains not to conceal tracks”¹⁵—of the third objectification, so that what might be excused up to now as invincible ignorance of the meaning of a genius would become a luminosity of dishonorable dodging.

¹⁴ This is a challenging statement that belongs in the discomfoting exchanges of the third objectification proposed by Lonergan in his 1833 Overture. A quite precise identification of the missed point adds further discomfort. On page 200 of *Ethics of Achievement*, Byrne notes the alternate interpretation of Michael Vertin in the matter of feelings and values. “It remains to the readers’ own effort at self-appropriation to determine which, if either of us, comes close to a correct understanding of these phenomena.” This is a gross methodological error in the science of progress. The task is the discomfoting task of the scientific struggle of the third objectification “ever-ready” (*Insight*, 747, 2nd last line, and its context of hope) to push subjectivities towards “cumulative and progressive results.” *Method in Theology*, 4.

¹⁵ *Method in Theology*, 193.