

Influences of the Gregorian University on Lonergan: 1933-40 The Accidents of a Life

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Part I An Intellectual Drama: Becoming a Critical Realist

Within the canvas of an intellectual biography the occasion when the intellectual desire of its subject first finds its inspiration and path, finds for the first time some of the questions that are going to be the subject's responsibility, is a solemn and even sacred moment. We know that with Lonergan this first occurred when, towards the beginning of his philosophy studies in Heythrop College, his curiosity was awakened by the problem of knowledge. There began there a journey that would occupy him for 28 years, culminating in the book *Insight*.

In Montreal that awakening was enlarged and refigured by his encounter with the Depression and his subsequent attempt to understand the causes of booms and slumps in an economy. Stewart's *Plato's Doctrine of Ideas*,¹ whose significance has been so comprehensively examined by Mark Morelli, also moved him on.² It was in the early days of this first journey that he arrived at the Gregorian University in the autumn of 1933. The first part of the paper will trace how in the following three years the agenda started in Heythrop would be broadened by an interest in the philosophy of history. At the end of that time, through the inspiration of lectures by Bernard Leeming, crucial elements of his later critical realism began to fall into place. The second part will examine how, later in the decade, the first path found itself becoming a preface to a wider journey concerned with the method of theology.

The Accident of his Move to Rome

But how did Lonergan get to Rome as a student of theology at the Gregorian University? The answer must be almost totally by accident. His teaching regency in Loyola Montreal was due to end in 1932 and his theology studies due to start that autumn. But during that teaching year he had some kind of row with the rector, Thomas MacMahon, a rector disliked by the young Jesuit teachers, but also a province consultor. As a result Lonergan's passage to theology studies was held back a year. He started, not in the autumn of 1932, but a year later. If he had started his theology studies in 1932 he would have remained in Montreal and would never have come to Rome.

¹ J.A. Stewart, *Plato's Doctrine of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1909).

² "At the Threshold of the Halfway House: An Investigation of the Lonergan/Stewart Encounter," a paper read at the Lonergan Workshop, Boston College, Friday June 23rd, 2000.

But that delay did not guarantee that he would start in the Gregorian. In fact he started his theology studies in Montreal in the autumn of 1933. Soon after news was received that three Slav students had withdrawn from the Gregorian. Providentially, their places were made available for Canadians. Hingston, the Provincial, interviewed Lonergan, putting to him the question, was he orthodox? Lonergan replied that he was but that he thought a lot about things. The outcome of the interview was that he was to go to Rome for his theological studies. He and his companions were the first Canadian scholastics ever to study theology in the Gregorian.

After his difficulties in Montreal he was elated by this development and there began his long involvement with the Gregorian University. He would spend six of the next seven years of his life there as a student and, starting in 1953, twelve more as a professor. It would exert a defining influence on his understanding of theology, culminating in his discovery there, in February 1965, of the functional specialties.

Before moving to Rome he visited his family in Buckingham and asked his mother to play for him her favourite piece, "The Mockingbird." Sadly she exclaimed that her fingers were not up to it.³ Although he could not have known it, it was to be the last time he would see her alive.

The Political World

Lonergan took up residence in the Bellarmino where, close by, from the balcony of the Palazzo Venezia, Mussolini would address the crowds. Phil Doherty, one of his friends in Rome, recalled that he and Lonergan used to use code names when they talked about Hitler and Mussolini. According to Paul Shaugnessey, Doherty told him that on one occasion he and Lonergan were just across the street from Hitler during one of his visits to Rome.⁴

In Germany the Weimar Republic was gone by January 1933, the year of Hitler's appointment as chancellor. The totalitarian wave was rising

3. *Caring About Meaning, Patterns in the Life of Bernard Lonergan*, edited by Pierrot Lambert, Charlotte Tansey and Cathleen Going, (Montreal: Thomas More Institute Papers/82, 1982) 237. The abbreviation CAM will be used for this work in future references.

4. The Quirinale, where Hitler would have been received, is at the rear of the Gregorian University. Hitler is mentioned in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, Vol. 3 Insight*, eds. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) 534. Hereafter CWL 3. The Nazis are mentioned in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan Vol. 21, For a New Political Economy* edited by Philip McShane (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1998) 4, and on page 61 of Thomas O'D. Hanley's notes taken at Lonergan's course on Insight in 1952-3.

and Jews, excluded from membership of the German Folk, began to leave the country. In April of 1933 Heidegger was elected rector of the University of Freiburg. During his fateful year as rector he promoted National Socialism and anti-semitism, events whose mark on the history of 20th century philosophy will be permanent.⁵

On May 10th 1933, in the public squares of cities and university towns there was a spectacular ceremony of burning of books. Authors whose works were burnt included Einstein, Freud, the Manns, and Kafka. In the autumn of 1933, just as Lonergan was arriving in Rome, Sauerbruch, Pinder and Heidegger took a public vow to support Hitler. In a later lecture in Heidelberg Heidegger abused those who did not follow suit.⁶ A cycle of decline and disintegration had begun.

The Theological World

In 1929, through the *Motu Proprio Quod Maxime*, the Biblical and Oriental Institutes became united through association with the Gregorian, an association that has since ceased. In the years that followed the staff expanded to over three hundred. New faculties were added including, significantly, a faculty of Church history in 1932. It was a time of expansion. It should be remembered that most of the teachers at the time would have been shaped by the anti-modernist movement in the early years of the century.

In 1931 the Constitution *Deus Scientiarum Dominus* (God, the Lord of the Sciences), whose drafting commission included Bea and Lanzarini, was issued. The problem which it addressed was that of locating what was then considered the heart of Catholic theology, dogmatic theology, within the context of the growth of positive and human sciences. The various disciplines involved were considered to be constituted by a logical, psychological and didactic coherence rather than a merely a material conglomeration. At the summit stands the main field of study, the “*disciplina praecipua*.” In theology it is dogma with the fundamental and the speculative parts of moral theology. In philosophy is the universal scholastic philosophy with all its divisions, logic, ontology, cosmology, and so forth.⁷

Deus Scientiarum Dominus, with its emphasis on dogmatic theology, was a part of a wider paradigm of Manual Theology, largely

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5. See Hugo Ott, *Martin Heidegger, A Political Life*, (London: Harper and Collins, 1993). Rudiger Safranski, *Martin Heidegger, Between Good and Evil*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), chapters 13-14.
 6. Maurice Friedmann, *Martin Buber's Life and Work, The Middle Years, 1932-1945*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988) Chapter 9, especially 159.
 7. I am summarizing here A. Bea's “The Apostolic Constitution, *Deus Scientiarum Dominus*, Its Origin and Spirit,” from *Theological Studies*, Vol. IV. No 1, March 1943, 34-52. The quote is from page 39.

inspired by Melchior Cano (1509-60). Whereas earlier the terms dogmatic theology were used to differentiate it from moral or historical theology, for Cano they were used to differentiate it from scholastic theology. Dogmatic theology, as Lonergan later put it:

.. replaced the inquiry of the *quaestio* by the pedagogy of the thesis. It demoted the quest of faith for understanding to a desirable, but secondary, and indeed optional goal. It gave basic and central significance to the certitudes of faith, their presuppositions, and their consequences. It owed its mode of proof to Melchior Cano and, as that theologian was also a bishop and inquisitor, so the new dogmatic theology not only proved its theses, but was also supported by the teaching authority and sanctions of the Church.⁸

Its sense that there could be no new and surprising insights in theology was in contrast with Aquinas' intellectualism and the exhortation of Vatican 1 to understand the revealed mysteries

The Student of Theology

In his first year Lonergan was in a class of just over 300 clerical religious students. About its content he has remarked:

Fundamental Theology (which was taught by Tromp) was a traditional term in scholastic theology. In the first year of theology you learned 'On the true religion' -- you settled that -- and then 'The true church,' and then 'The inspiration of the Scripture' -- and you were off to the races. It settled the premises from which you were going to deduce the rest of theology: the 'basic truths.'⁹

Arthurus Vermeersch's *Moral Theology* dealt with the theological virtues of faith and charity, a course he would later teach. The third part of the Church history course, taught by Robert Lieber, addressed modern political questions such as the relation of the Church to revolution, liberalism, nationalism, socialism and bolshevism. It was a defining experience in his emerging interest in the philosophy of history whose influence can be traced in a text he wrote at the time, "An Essay in Fundamental Sociology."

8. "Theology in its New Context," *A Second Collection* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1974) 57. See also Giuseppe Ruggiere, "Faith and History," 93 in *The Reception of Vatican II* (Washington: University of America Press, 1987), edited by Alberigo, Jossua and Komonchak, and translated by Matthew J. O'Connell.

9. CAM 73, see also 261f.

The year of study successfully completed, Lonergan spent fifty days of his summer vacation in 1934 learning German in the villa of the German College in Rome. Despite the strain of being made feel a guest in every sense of the word he felt there were good ideas to be found among the Germans. He would request permission to repeat the experience the following year, assuming his provincial did not mind “my offending the extraordinary susceptibilities of some of the local nationalists.”¹⁰ Presumably the emergence of National Socialism featured in his conversations.

In his second year the main dogma courses dealt with God as unity and trinity. The text for the former was Volume I of the *Summa*, supplemented by Lennerz's *De Deo Uno* and *De Novissimis*. Topics included the existence, knowability, essence and attributes of God, God's knowledge and will. Lonergan had a high opinion of Lennerz, a German theologian, and would later use his text in Toronto when he taught a course on providence and predestination.

In his second semester Filograssi introduced him to the classical theology of the Trinity which he himself would teach in his years as a Professor in Toronto and later Rome. The course was structured around theses on the processions of a Word and of Love in God, on the Divine relations, persons and missions. The text was the *Summa*, I, qqqs 27-43, complemented by Billot, *De Deo Uno et Trino*. Later he was to remark: “But I mean the tradition like Billot, who said that we get the Trinitarian procession far more clearly in the imagination than in the intellect -- missing the whole point of the Trinitarian processions.”¹¹ The recognition that Billot had lost sight of Aquinas' position on the matter would in time become the source of a major new intellectual challenge and problem for Lonergan, what precisely did Aquinas mean by processions in God? Just over a decade later his *Verbum* articles will open with a reference to Billot and the question, are the created analogies for the procession of a word in God to be found in the imagination or the intellect?

Following his own Questions - the Keeler essay

Lonergan was further encouraged in his intellectual vocation by Leo Keeler, an American professor of the history of philosophy at the Gregorian. As at the time Lonergan felt his future was in teaching philosophy, they clearly had common ground. He took the unusual step of trying out his ideas on Keeler in the form of a 30,000 word essay on Newman on assent.¹² This must have made an impression because when

10. Letter of January 22nd 1935 to Provincial.

11. CAM 103/4.

12. Pages 7,8,9,13,23,24,27,28,32,33,34,35 and 36 are extant, the archived references running between A14-237. For remarks on Keeler see CAM 268.

Keeler's doctoral thesis, *The Problem of Error from Plato to Kant* was published in 1934, he took the unusual step of inviting Lonergan, a student, to review it for the journal, *Gregorianum*.

The essay is notable in that Crowe finds in it a scorn of Aristotle and a favouring of Plato.¹³ In this Lonergan was influenced by his earlier reading in Montreal, of Stewart's *Plato's Doctrine of Ideas*. Liddy considers that it gives us valuable insights into his statement in *Insight* that the halfway house between materialism and critical realism is idealism.¹⁴ The question arises, to what extent is the remark autobiographical and the essay on Stewart a stage in that development?

For Plato, as read by Stewart, the relation between an idea and its related particulars is similar to that between a mathematical equation and instances of the curve of which it is the equation. Give specific numerical values to the coefficients in the equation and you can then trace the curve:

“The Idea of the circle, as defined by its equation in the general form, is not itself properly speaking a curve... Such an equation, like the ideal number, is at once many, as synthesizing an indefinite plurality of positions, and one, as synthesizing them in accord with a definite law...”¹⁵

An idea is a unity which synthesizes a multitude of relations. Such was the impact of this that on four different occasions in his later life he referred to it. In 1979 in Boston College he remarked:

Aristotle and Thomas held that you abstracted from phantasm the *eidōs*, the *species*, the *idea*. And my first clue into the idea was when I was reading a book by an Oxford don by the name of J.A. Stewart who in 1905 had written on Plato's myths and in 1909 on Plato's doctrine of ideas. And he explained the doctrine of ideas by contending that for Plato an idea was something like the Cartesian formula for a circle, i.e. $(x^2 + y^2) = r^2$ and that exemplified the act of understanding for me, and the idea was getting what's in behind the formula for the circle. So you have something in between the concept and the datum or phantasm. And that is the sort of thing that you can't hold and be a naive realist.¹⁶

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13. Frederick Crowe, *Lonergan* (London: Chapman, 1992) 34, n 49. See also page 13 of the fragments.
 14. Richard Liddy, *Transforming Light, Intellectual Conversion in the Early Lonergan* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1993) 76-84, especially 84.
 15. Stewart *Plato's Doctrine of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909) 74
 16. CAM 44, italics mine. See also page 4 of the transcript for Lonergan Workshop,

Stewart, I believe, broke Lonergan out of his naive realism. But it still leaves us with the problem that what Stewart means by an idea is nothing like what Aquinas, Aristotle, and Lonergan, by the time of the *Verbum* articles, meant. I do not find Lonergan's above position on them in any of his writings before the 4th *Verbum* article in 1949. Where in that movement does the Keeler essay come?

The fragments of the essay that remain open with Hume's conclusion of his study of perception that causes cannot be seen. This famously stimulated Kant and posed for Lonergan the question: what does understanding apprehend? In this context:

4. Hence, the idea of substance has become the trial case, the experimentum crucis, between the dogmatic and the critical schools. For if understanding is ultimately apprehensive, then "substance," what lies beneath or stands beneath the appearances, must be had by apprehension; this is the scholastic position. On the critical theory, the substance is known by an immanent activity and so is not apprehended but merely understood to be there; clearly, this corresponds exactly with our knowledge of substance: we do not know what it is - as we would, if we had ever apprehended it; all we know is that it is there.¹⁷

Lonergan is critical of the scholastics' spiritual apprehension of substance (which in other contexts he seems to equate with intuition) and sets out to explore the extent to which the critical account can be verified in philosophical inquiry. Is there a suggestion here that understanding was for him at this point an immanent activity, a suggestion of idealism?¹⁸ Linguistically, 'entendement' in French, 'verstand' in German, the medieval 'intus-legere,' and 'epistemi' in Greek (but not yet insight) suggest that by understanding we know something not sensibly presented.

Some puzzling remarks follow on page 24 which illuminate his mindset at the time on a range of topics including the relation between apprehension and facts of existence, the nature of knowledge (both of which I have italicized) and the real distinction between essence and existence:

Boston College, June 19th, 1979, Toronto Archives.

17. Op. cit., n 12, 7 paragraph 4.

18. On page 13, after a comment on the exercises of St Ignatius, he continues: "And while on the point, one may mention how well the theory of intellection as an immanent act fits in with a philosophy of mysticism."

The law of the object is distinct from the fact that the object exists. This distinctness is due to the nature of our knowledge. *For the fact of existence is known by the apprehension; the law of the object is known by understanding. Knowledge consists of a conjunction of presentation and understanding into one whole:* the pure presentation of experience and the pure intellection (abstract idea) are the *entia quibus* of knowledge (human). This distinction the scholastic theory objectifies by a real distinction between essence and existence; it puts the composition, not in the mind, but, in some very obscure way, in the object. Whether the critical metaphysician will assert such a real distinction or not, I shall discuss presently. But if he does it will not be due to the distinction in the mind but only on the analogy of this distinction and as a theory to explain definite facts.

On page 34 we find the following:

On the one hand the hypothesis is not a mere guess; the hypothesis has to be a possible explanation and a rather plausible explanation. It is an act of understanding, an idea that has to be evident in the object. Thus there is an intelligible relation between the hypothesis and the facts; ...

These remarks help us to some extent to understand the mindset he was moving from when in 1935 in his intellectual conversion he grasped the nature of the relation between judgement and what exists.

The Vision Statement

Critical metaphysics is a science of sciences grounded in induction. In developing its theory of reality it will draw on all human understanding through science of the objective world. Each science discovers its particular empirical laws or relationships, Tycho de Brahe, Kepler and Newton being mentioned. There follows the visionary punchline: "Critical metaphysics takes the explanations arrived at in every field of science - physics, chemistry, biology, psychology, history, ethics, etc. - and frames a unified view of reality in its totality."¹⁹ The approach is in contrast with the straightjacket of Kant's categories, in whom, Lonergan comments, no one believes. Within this framework Lonergan brings things into a focus with his remarks: "Such then is the "Whole I planned," the general scheme of human life into which the acts of assent and certitude must be fitted and of which they form parts."²⁰

Although fragmentary, the Keeler essay on Newman is a major text

19. Ibid., 23.

20. Ibid., 28.

in the realm of Lonergan studies. Unlike many other texts it shows him in process, struggling towards a destination in his problem solving which is not yet in sight. I believe it gives meaning to the later phrase of the halfway house between materialism and critical realism.

The Awakening of his Interest in the Philosophy of History

That Lonergan was actively pursuing his dream of a critical metaphysics which would be a science of sciences, including history, is made clear in the course of the letter of January 1935. In it he stated that he had a draft of an essay on the metaphysics of history “that will throw Marx and Hegel, despite the enormity of their influence on this very account, into the shade.”

It takes the “objective and inevitable laws” of economics, of psychology (environment, tradition) and of progress (material, intellectual: automatic up to a point, then either deliberate and planned or the end of a civilisation) to find the higher synthesis of these laws in the mystical body.

Some insights into that work can be gleaned from the surviving chapter of his “An Essay in Fundamental Sociology” entitled “Philosophy of History.”²¹ It can be dated as prior to January 1935 but after his first year course on Church history.

The essay is prefaced by a handwritten quotation in Greek of the passage from the *Republic* on the need for philosophers as kings to rule. The surviving text takes as its theme the question of the human control of history. The successful emergence of liberalism since the middle ages poses again not only the question of who controls the power in history, but also whether that assumption of power is for progress or extinction. It goes on to discuss philosophical foundations with reference to persons, social acts, and the notion of progress. It then explores the phases of history from the viewpoint of a philosophy of society and history whose goal is to master the process. It concludes with the problems of dialectic, of meaning and of God's presence in history.

The problem about the meaning or purpose of the external flow of history leads us to the question, what is progress? In order to work out a metaphysic of history, a differential calculus of progress, the differentials separating off one epoch from another must be examined. The fluctuations of history will stand to “the differential equation of history” as the aggregate of values of a mathematical curve stand to its differential

21. Toronto Archives, File A 713 History. This file also contains drafts of his later thought on the dialectic of history.

equation:²²

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 sensible 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 setting it new problems.²³

The human intellect is intellect in potency. Its development is gradual and not the achievement of the individual but rather of the race. It can operate in three kinds of situations. Firstly, there is the ordinary action in which a man lives as his ancestors. Secondly there is the change that follows from the emergence of new ideas - scientific or economic that understand the objective world, - ideas vitiated by the existence of sin or elevated by the influence of divine revelation. Thirdly there is the change that follows from the emergence of systems of ideas, philosophies or world views. In short the human intellect is a basic variable of the equation of history.

Finally he comes to consider the needs of the present and the future. Central here is a critique of the modern state which has for him no claim to make final and absolute decisions because of its imperfection. Modern states are not conducted according to any intelligible principles. Social theory cannot justify their pretended rights to making absolute decisions as they are neither economically or politically independent. Their actions are immoral and cannot but be immoral as witnessed in the perversion of the newspaper and school and in armament manufacture and almost everything else. Nationalism is the setting up of a tribal god, and not merely in the case of Germany - at whom the whole world smiles for its self-idolatry - but in every case. Clearly the radical menace of National Socialism had not yet clicked for him.

At the heart of the final analysis is the comparison, based on Pauline teaching, of humankind in the image of Adam and of Christ. It is from these themes, treated in Bernard Leeming's second year course on creation and redemption, that the fundamental meaning of history is derived. The greatest evil for Lonergan is that concretized in the historic flow, "the

22. In CWL 3, 244, Lonergan talks about dialectic standing to generalized method as the differential equation to classical physics, or the operator equation to more recent physics.

23. Op. cit., n 21, 99.

capital of injustice that hang like a pall over every brilliant thing.”²⁴ The Christian antidote to this is Christ's victory over sin and the exercise of charity. Christ's social form is the *koinonia* which integrates what has disintegrated.

The 1935 Letter to his Provincial

On January 22nd 1935 Lonergan wrote a most revealing letter to his provincial in which he meditated on aspects of his projected future as a teacher of philosophy and the difficulties he had with the prevailing tradition:

...; in a word it is that, what the current Thomists (Suzarezian?) call intellectual knowledge is really sense knowledge: of intellectual knowledge they have nothing to say: intellectual knowledge is for example, the “seeing the nexus” between subject and predicate in the universal judgement: this seeing the nexus is an operation they never explain. From an initial Cartesian “cogito” I can work out a luminous and unmistakable meaning to intellectus agens et possibilis, abstractio, conversion to phantasm, intellect knowing only the universal, illumination of phantasm, etc. etc.

Is there a sense of the immanence of mind in his reference to the Cartesian cogito?

Lonergan also refers to the naive realism of Suarez and the Spaniards for whom:

(substance is “something there”); then, the brilliant Descartes, who was brought up on this stuff; then the antithesis of Spinoza and Hume; then Kant (and do you see any difference between Kant's need to go back to the causal origins of knowledge to know the thing-in-itself and, on the other hand the Thomistic conversion to phantasm to know the singular.

These points need to be compared with his later remarks about Hoenen's articles which flag a considerable development in his thought:

Hoenen's point that intellect abstracted both terms and nexus from the phantasm was regarded as Scotist language, both terms and nexus belong to the conceptual order; what Aquinas held was that intellect abstracted from phantasm a

24. Ibid., 128/9. See also 121.

preconceptual form or species of *quod quid erat esse*, whence both terms and nexus were inwardly spoken.²⁵

Thirdly, he outlined his dream, already mentioned, of developing a metaphysics of history as an exercise in the application of his ideas, his cognitional theory. In January of 1935 this was Lonergan's focal interest. The question of method in theology was not yet on his agenda.

The letter ended by posing to his provincial the question about the unfolding of his life's work. Ought it be left simply to providence, or ought the involvement of superiors as agents of providence be recognized? It was a problem that occupied him throughout the thirties and on which he would seek advice in 1938. Its significance ought not to be underestimated. The letter is indicative of the fact that the 31 year old Lonergan had a dream and in its pursuit felt the dialectic of hope and anxiety just as much or possibly even more than the rest of us.²⁶ He sensed that the conditions of possibility of the process itself at the time lay in the hands of others.

The Realism of the Incarnation: Lonergan's Intellectual Conversion

In the autumn Semester of 1935 Lonergan took a course on the Incarnate Word by Bernard Leeming, a course he himself would teach in Toronto and Rome. Topics addressed included Christ's knowledge and consciousness about which he would later write. But a central question was about the mode of union of the eternal word of God with a temporal human nature, Jesus of Nazareth. The Christian tradition of the Patristic era teaches that Christ is a divine person in whom through the incarnation there are hypostatically united divine and human natures. By a person, divine or human, is meant not a personality but an ontologically distinct non-fictional existing indivisible unity. This means that in Christ, considered as a divine person, there can be a human nature but not an ontologically distinct human person. The Christian doctrine that Jesus of Nazareth who was born in Bethlehem is not an ontologically distinct existing indivisible human person is a position that, like the reality of the air, brings us up short in our tracks. It challenges us to clarify what kind of a reality are we talking about when we talk about Christ?²⁷

Clearly the doctrine implies a realism, a stance on the ontological reality of the being of persons and their natures:

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25. "Insight Revisited," *A Second Collection*, 266-7. He repeats the account of Hoenen's influence again in a work published as late as 1980, "Reality, Myth, Symbol," in *Myth, Symbol and Reality*, edited by A.M. Olson (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980) 35.
 26. "Insight Revisited" 266.
 27. See CWL 3, 665 for a comment on the metaphysics of proportionate and transcendent being.

Can you have one person and two natures? The argument given me by a good Thomist, Father Bernard Leeming, was that if you have a real distinction between *esse* (existence) and essence, the *esse* can be the ground of the person and of the essence too. If the *esse* is relevant to two essences, then you can have one person in two natures. On that basis I solved the problem of Christ's consciousness: one subject and two subjectivities.²⁸

In a letter to Bernard Tyrrell in October 1967 he remembered picking up the notion of the constitutive role of judgement in human knowledge from Stefanu at the time when Leeming was teaching about the *unicum esse*, the single existence of being in Christ. By a providential accident during the academic year in which he took Leeming's course he was also revising for his final examination with Stefanu. Stefanu taught him about Marechal who seems, as in the case in Rahner, to have rescued Lonergan from naive realism. In *Insight Revisited* he described what happened:

It was through Stefanu ... that I learnt to speak of human knowledge as not intuitive but discursive with the decisive component in judgement. This view was confirmed by my familiarity with Augustine's key notion, *veritas*, and the whole was rounded out by Bernard Leeming's course on the Incarnate Word, which convinced me that there could not be a hypostatic union without a real distinction between essence and existence. This, of course was all the more acceptable, since Aquinas' *esse* corresponded to Augustine's *veritas* and both harmonised with Marechal's view of judgement.²⁹

The one existent is known and affirmed by a judgement. But where does this leave the understanding?

The above questions address distinctions in the object of our knowledge. What happened in 1935 for the 30 year old Lonergan was that there clicked for him the fact that some of them were related to parallel distinctions in our cognitional powers or operations. Through Stewart, Stefanu, Marechal and Leeming Lonergan was beginning to make the break with naive realism and knowledge as intuitive, both of which were strong in the tradition that formed him. Involved in the break was the grasp that existence is known, not by intuition, but by judgement at the term of the

28. CAM 258. The quote continues: "It wasn't the divine subjectivity that was crucified but the human subjectivity; it was the human subjectivity that dies and rose again, not the divine person."

29. "Insight Revisited," 265.

discursive process of knowing. One of the pillars of his later philosophy was now falling into place.

Lonergan later described this development in him as an intellectual conversion:

I had the intellectual conversion myself when in doing theology I saw that you can't have one person in two natures in Christ unless there is a real distinction between the natures and something else that is one. But that is the long way around.³⁰

He had broken out of his Suarezian upbringing.

Part II A Personal Drama: from Philosophy to Method in Theology.

In the summer of 1937 Lonergan took a holiday, visiting the Pitti Palace in Florence where he enjoyed the Raphaels.³¹ At the beginning of September he went to the Abbaye St-Acheul in Amiens, in the valley of the Somme, for his final year of prayer and formation as a Jesuit, his Tertianship. The French in the locality had been expecting a war since 1932. With the question of Czechoslovakia on the agenda it must have seemed near in 1937. The Tertian instructor, Pere Leontius Aurel gave the Tertians information about the political developments during his conferences. In May 1940 the town would be invaded, the Cathedral alone escaping the bombs.

As in the novitiate, the thirty day retreat was the major event. It began two weeks after their arrival and involved three and sometimes four conferences each day. Lonergan must have been impressed by the experience because his notebook survives. The first week was concerned with purification through God's operation on our unfreedoms or sinfulness. The parallels between Christ and the world and the priest and the world were set forth.

The second week focused on our co-operation with God's initiatives in our lives. It went round and round the fundamental reality of God's invitation to both the religious life and the priesthood, and our response in faith. In the Old Testament humility, submission and obedience were central; in the New Testament love not of the law but of the invitation - follow me, is central. The three degrees of humility are related to three

30. The quotation is from a transcript by Nicholas Graham of discussions at the Lonergan Workshop, Boston College, June 13, 1978. For a related discussion see Richard Liddy, *op. cit.*, n 14, 114f.

31. CAM 222-3.

responses to God's invitation to vocation - that of the rich young man who goes away sad because of his wealth, of the excuse to first go and bury my father, and finally that of the apostles. As well as invitation, there is also mission. The Church ought not neglect the foreign missions. But what was Lonergan's mission in the Church to be, his invitation?

The group also had a certain amount of external input including a lecture from De Lubac.³² After Easter of 1938 Lonergan was sent for a week to Paris to the *Ecole Sociale Populaire* to listen to four leaders each day speaking about specialized movements in Catholic Action. It was here that he met Pere Desbuquois, a charming man who had time at his disposal for meeting people and whose personal initiatives had resulted in remarkable achievements.

He was a man I felt I must consult, for I had little hope of explaining to my superiors what I wished to do and of persuading them to allow me to do it. So I obtained an appointment, and when the time came, I asked him how one reconciled obedience with initiative in the Society. He looked me over and said: "Go ahead and do it. If superiors do not stop you, that is obedience. If they do stop you, stop and that is obedience." The advice is hardly very exciting today but at the time it was for me a great relief.³³

Analytic Concepts of History

What personal initiatives was Lonergan pursuing at the time? In the essay "Insight Revisited" Lonergan refers to work he did during his Tertianship year on the philosophy of history. The extant texts from the time are comprised of three files of typewritten notes of 17, 18, and 19 pages, whose titles are slight variations on the theme of analytic concepts of history.³⁴

Analytic concepts are concerned with the why, the manner in which the compound is made up of elements, the movement of forces and accelerations, the circle of spatial relations. An analytic concept of history will prescind from accidental causes such as plagues and race. It will attend to the why, the essential cause or explanation of history, what makes it what it is rather than something else, the action of human wills in the framework of solidarity.

Human action divides into three categories of acts according to nature, acts contrary to nature, acts above nature. As intelligence is central

32. CAM, 33.

33. "Insight Revisited" 265

34. Archives File 713, History. The different titles will appear in subsequent notes.

to man's nature the three metaphysically ultimate categories which will feature in the dialectic can be described as human actions intelligible to man, as unintelligible, and as too intelligible.³⁵ The course of history can be analyzed as the resultant of an ideal line of progress from acts according to nature, of decline from acts contrary to nature, and of renaissance from the exercise of the supernatural virtues. Acts of will and freedom are then central. He concludes that the whole can be viewed as a multiple dialectic, a difficult term to explain. By an analysis of the dialectic Lonergan hopes to arrive at an analytic concept of history.

Economic development liberates man from physical needs only to impose upon him social dependence. In proportion as economic development proceeds, the social unity is of necessity enlarged. As the power of intellect becomes greater, its higher specialization requires a broader basis.³⁶ At all times in every social community there is a body of thought, (in his earlier writings *Geist*), that is socially dominant and effective. Though it may change over time at each moment it is the rule, dominant. Other thought is the exception. This dominant thought is subject to a dialectical process:

Taking the matter more largely, we observe that the dominant thought at any time arose from the situation that preceded it; that its tendency is to transform the situation; that the transformed situation will give rise to new thought, and this not merely to suggest it but to impose it.

By the dialectic, then, we mean the succession (within a social channel of mutual influence) of situation, thought, action, new situation, new thought, and so forth.³⁷

The dialectic is really an inverted experiment in which reality continuously strives to mould the outlook of man into conformity with itself by revealing the evil arising from his errors. Because of the transference of ideas across frontiers and of reaction to them we find in culture a multiple dialectic.

Decline is a deviation from the ideal. It can be minor, major, or compound. Social tension arises because it is not clear that new economic or political ideas are better than the old. But what really brings about decline is sin, the irrational. In this section we find his early thought on the surd, individual and group bias. Self-interest is not enlightened because it is not objective. It centres the world in the ego of the individual or class and neither is the centre:

35. Ibid., "Outline of an Analytic Concept of History," 6.

36. Ibid., 4.

37. Ibid., 4-5

Second, by reason of their advantages, the favoured are able to solve the antitheses that stand against their own progressive well-being. By reason of their ego-centricity, they barely think of solving any others. The bourgeois is full of the milk of human kindness: but this bias in outlook makes him pronounce non-existent or insoluble the antitheses that do not directly affect him.³⁸

There results a distinction between the privileged and the depressed which gives rise to an objective disorder which contains the irrational. It cannot be understood in the same manner as intelligible progress from one situation to another.

There results, in stark contrast with development, a succession of social syntheses which are actually decreasing in intelligible content. Each of the stages in the succession of lower syntheses calls forth a human mysticism:

the organized lie of a society defending what it was and, for the moment, preventing it from being worse than it will be. Thus we have the mysticisms of naturalism and progress, of the revolution in Russia, of nationalism and race in Germany; ... as each of these falls short of a whole view of human nature, in that measure it is a lie and its mysticism drug like in its effects.³⁹

Decline sets a problem that has no internal human solution.

Assigned to Teach in the Gregorian University

In June 1938 the consultors of the Canadian province, this time without MacMahon, advised the provincial, Henry Keane, that Lonergan was a suitable candidate for further studies in Rome. When completed they also agreed that he could teach there for a while, adding the qualification that they should pay for his studies in case they wanted to recall him to Canada at a later date. Around this time the Jesuit General was holding a special congregation in Rome. He invited the assembled provincials to donate men to the Gregorian University. Henry Keane donated Lonergan: "I was informed of this at the end of the Tertianship and told to do a biennium in philosophy."⁴⁰

On July 20th Vincent McCormick, the rector of the University, wrote to his Provincial, thanking him for the donation that the Canadian

38. Ibid., "Analytic Concepts of History in Blurred Outline," 11,b.

39. Ibid., "Outline of an Analytic Concept of History," 12.

40. "Insight Revisited" 266

Province had made of Lonergan. The letter continued:

Fr. Lonergan has left a splendid record behind him here; and we shall be happy to see him back for further studies. I would suggest - supposing his own preferences are not too strong for one field rather than the other - that he devote himself to Theology. In that Faculty there are hundreds of English-speaking students, who will be needing his help in the future. At present there is only one English-speaking professor in the Faculty.

The provincial would clearly fall in with his request.

Without knowing this after his Tertianship Lonergan moved to Milltown Park, Dublin to prepare his notes for the first retreat he would give at the Loreto convent in Wexford. On August 10th he wrote a letter to his Provincial which reveals how much he was still engrossed in his reflections on history:

As philosophy of history is as yet not recognized as the essential branch of philosophy that it is, I hardly expect to have it assigned me as my subject during the biennium. I wish to ask your approval for maintaining my interest in it, profiting by such opportunities as may crop up, and in general devoting to it such time as I prudently judge can be spared.

Clearly the work he had done in Amien in his spare time was exciting him. At this time, given his head, he would have written his PhD on the philosophy of history rather than epistemology.

In September Lonergan himself received a letter from Fr McCormick informing him that he was to do a biennium in theology.⁴¹ Since January 1935 Lonergan had wondered about the providential role of his superiors in his unfolding quest. He was now getting his answer. The shift from a career in philosophy to one in theology effectively took him, at a moments notice, off one major road and put him on another. It was a road on which the problem of method in theology lay in waiting.

His Doctoral Director and Topic

Lonergan spent the last three weeks of September in Heythrop before returning to Rome just as the Munich conference, with its promise of peace, was taking place. That prospect was devastated on October 5th when Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia. Living in the room next to him at the

41. "Insight Revisited" 266

time was Michael Connelley, an Irish province Jesuit who remembered Lonergan's typewriter incessantly on the go. Shortly after the invasion they went for a walk up to the gardens. Lonergan was agitated by the event and remarked to him that war was coming and that he wanted to get out of Europe as quickly as possible. It was Connelley's impression that he was well informed and understood the significance of what was happening. This was the time of Kristallnacht.

Despite these distressing events his main task was to find a thesis director. When in France Boyer had been suggested to him. He was intelligent and had changed his view on the real distinction between essence and existence.⁴² About his thesis topic he has said:

I had a good thesis because Charles Boyer said to me:

“There's this article in *the Summa* and I don't think the Molinists interpret it correctly; and I don't think the Banesianists interpret it correctly. Find out what it means. Study the *loco parallela* and the historical sources. See what light you can shed on the question.”⁴³

As Vincent McCormick and Henry Keane decided he should change to theology, Boyer chose the thesis topic and issued the quite focused directions. None of them could have foreseen the fateful significance of their choices on the direction of his life. The topic was approved on Dec 6th, 1938 under the title, “A History of St. Thomas' Thought on Operative Grace”.

The question, Q111, in the I-IIae, is about the divisions of grace into sanctifying (*gratiae gratum faciens*) and actual grace (a term never used by Aquinas who used terms such as *auxilium* or *inclinatio*), operative and cooperative, prevenient and subsequent. The second article of the question, which is the significant one, is on the division of grace into operative and cooperative:

As was said above, grace can be understood in two senses.

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42. From a conversation with Prof. Fred Lawrence, Dec 7th, 1984 described in n 9 of Frederick Crowe's “A Note on Lonergan's Dissertation and Its Introductory Pages,” *Method Journal of Lonergan Studies*, October 1985, 1-9. This has to be related to Leeming's course on the significance of the real distinction. Later, in a letter to his Provincial on May 5th 1946, he remarked that Boyer could not answer his questions, so he directed himself.
43. *Curiosity at the Centre of One's Life, Statements and Questions of R. Eric O'Connor, Thomas More Papers/84*, edited by Martin O'Hara, (Montreal: Thomas More Institute, 1987) 275-6, 405f. and defence notes, p 15 where Lonergan narrates the story. For background see *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, Vol. 1, Grace and Freedom*, edited by Frederick Crowe and Robert Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000) 63, 200f. Hereafter CWL 1.

Firstly, as the divine assistance by which God moves us to will and do good; secondly, as the habitual gift implanted in us by God. In both these senses grace is satisfactorily divided into operative and cooperative grace. (Q111, a2, Resp)

Methodological Questions

In discussing the passage Lonergan drew attention to the notorious fact that for several centuries Molinists have uniformly concluded that Aquinas was a Molinist and Banezians that he was a Banezian. Each started from their dogmatic presuppositions and built up their arguments accordingly. This methodological impasse he considers will not be broken: "Unless a writer can assign a method that of itself tends to greater objectivity than those hitherto employed."⁴⁴ And so the first part of his thesis, only recently published, is devoted to the problem of theological method. The method which Lonergan will suggest involves the use of a theory of the history of theological speculation. The question of method in theology was surfacing.

More strategically his approach involved arranging the relevant texts in a chronological sequence and carefully reading and interpreting them. It was in this phantasm of the chronological sequence of the texts of Aquinas that he began to gain access to the problem:

If Thomas treats the same question several times, compare the passages. My dissertation was on operative grace, a topic Thomas treated three times explicitly and each time he changed. Operative grace was only sanctifying grace in the *Sentences*. It was sanctifying grace and help, *auxilium*, in the *De Veritate*. ('Lead us not into temptation, eh? and 'We must pray for perseverance.') So sanctifying grace was both *operans* and *cooperans* - but for perseverance, *cooperans*. In the *Summa* he had actual grace (though he never used that expression) but he also had *motus divinus* or *motio divina* and both were sanctifying grace, and the *motiones divinae* were *operans* and *cooperans*. To arrive at his final position he was changing his mind on liberty and he was developing his notions of operation. 'How could God change the will, pluck out the heart of stone and put in the heart of flesh? That is God operating on the will. Well, what's that operation?' He was working on things like that.⁴⁵

44. CWL 1, 153, see also 159-60.

45. CAM 4-5.

The same approach could be applied to the question of the relation between sin and freedom. Parallel problems in contemporary experience would have to do with the loss of control of over our will that occurs in addiction or the problem of our freedom to change our will from bad to good.

For example, Thomas, treating the question 'Can a man in the state of sin avoid further sin?' says in his *Sentences*, 'Certainly; otherwise he wouldn't be free.' In the *De Veritate* he has twenty-two objections (negative, eleven; positive, eleven) and a solution that runs over about nine columns in the Marietti edition. He answers both the affirmation and the negative, but he has a theory of moral impotence there. To handle that, you have to know about the surd. 'Why did Adam sin?' If there were a reason, it wouldn't have been a sin, eh?⁴⁶

The dogmatic datum forced Aquinas to revise his initial position. Out of this confusion there began to emerge the notion of actual grace. The question arose, are there graces that are not habitual but which presumably could change our habitual state?

Aquinas was searching for a theological understanding of the manner in which God operates on the human heart of stone, removes it, cooperates with good will to give it good performance and yet respects human freedom. The theological understanding that was being pursued was closely related to the movement, in the different weeks, of the Ignatian exercises which Lonergan followed each year in his annual retreat and in the previous year had taken in their 30 day form. In November 1975 Harvey Egan gave a lecture in St Mary's, Boston College on consolation without a cause. Only then did Lonergan link the Ignatian Exercises with his dissertation on Aquinas:

I had been hearing these words (Consolation without a previous cause) since 1922 at the annual retreats made by Jesuits preparing for the priesthood. They occur in St. Ignatius's "Rules for the Discernment of Spirits in the Second Week of the Exercises." But now, after fifty-three years, I began for the first time to grasp what they meant. What had intervened was what Rahner describes as the anthropological turn, the turn from metaphysical objects to conscious subjects. What I was learning was that the Ignatian "*examen conscientiae*" might mean not an examination of conscience but an examination of consciousness: after all in the romance languages the same

46. CAM 5-6.

word is used to denote both conscience and consciousness, both *Gewissen* and *Bewusstsein*. I was seeing that “consolation” and “desolation” named opposite answers to the question, how do you feel when you pray? Are you absorbed or are you blocked? I was hearing that my own work on operative grace in St Thomas brought to life a positive expression of what was meant by Ignatius when he spoke of “consolation without a previous cause.” In Aquinas grace is operative when the mind is not a mover but only moved; in Ignatius consolation is from God alone when there is no conscious antecedent to account for consolation.⁴⁷

The remark shows the extent of the chasm between the spiritual life and theology at the time.

Operation in Time

A first step in Aquinas's project was to think out in the most general terms the meaning of operation. Being operated on is a phenomenon that occurs at all levels in our universe, physical, chemical, biological, human, divine. We can ask the questions, what does an agent do and what can be done to it?, and our answers will be in terms of operations. To operate is to enter into a relation with an entity on which one operates. To be operated on is to enter into a relation of dependence on an operator. When an agent operates its operation produces an effect. So the question arises, does the production of an effect result in a change in the agent? It was Aquinas' position that when the fire heats the meat or the musician makes music or the teacher teaches that all the change was in the object operated on. There does not occur any change in the operator.

Causes act in time. But for a cause to act effectively, that on which it operates must be pre-disposed to the operation of the cause at that particular point in time. So the wood must be brought to the axe, the hair to the scissors, a disposition to learn to the pedagogy of the teacher. What brings the object into the right relation or disposition with the cause is termed *premotion* by Aristotle and *application* by Aquinas.

How then does God pre-move or apply the subject so that his operation can produce a required effect at a given point in time? For Molina God would tailor his operation to the situation so the individual determined God's providence. For Aquinas the answer was through providence and fate. He acknowledged Aristotle's assertion of the *per*

47. Letter to Thomas O'Malley, Dean of Arts and Sciences, Boston College, November 8th 1978.

accidens and that there could be no science for us of the accidental.⁴⁸ The divine plan has a twofold existence. It exists in the mind of God and there it is termed providence. It exists in the created universe and there it is termed fate. God in his eternal providence understands exactly all the myriad of situations and circumstances which an individual will encounter in the course of his or her life. It is through those circumstances as providentially ordained that God premoves the individual. Later he will divide premotion into external and internal. According to Lonergan, God for Aquinas was a transcendental artisan planning history.⁴⁹

In the *Summa*, Aquinas affirmed that by fate things are ordained to produce given effects. Fate is a cause in conjunction with natural causes. It is the disposition, arrangement, seriation of the order of secondary causes. It is not a quality and much less a substance but belongs to the category of relation. Together such relations give a single fate for the universe. Taken singly they give the many fates of Virgil's life: "*Te tua fata trahunt.*"⁵⁰ Application is then the causal certitude of providence terminating in the right disposition, relation, proximity between the mover and moved: without it motion cannot take place now; with it motion automatically results. Fate is the dynamic pattern of relations through which the design of the divine artisan unfolds in natural and human history. Without fate things cannot act. With it they do. Thus fate and application and instrumental virtue all reduce to the divine plan.

Reassigned to Teaching in Montreal

On March 2nd 1939, as the European situation was worsening, the new Pope, Pius XII took up office for what was to be a long and difficult reign. In April of 1939 in the middle of his work on the thesis Lonergan communicated to his provincial his desire to return to Canada for the summer. He had been promised a trip to Canada, presumably after his Biennium was finished and before he took up his appointment as a lecturer in the Gregorian. He was now asking that the trip be brought forward. The provincial wrote to the General in Rome communicating his request commenting that he had been away for six years, was somewhat tired and unwell, and felt that a trip to his native parts would refresh him. He made it clear that Lonergan was finding his exile hard but no mention was made of the fact that his mother was seriously ill, surely a strange and unusual omission.

The reply came in May turning down the request for the trip. It added that he was now to return to Canada after finishing his Thesis and was to teach there for a number of years before taking up his appointment

48. CWL 1, 79f.

49. Ibid., 86.

50. Ibid.

in the Gregorian. On September 1st Hitler invaded Poland. Two days later Britain and France declared war.

By Christmas of 1939 his mother's cancer began to deteriorate. An operation was attempted in the New Year but was unsuccessful. So far away the one who had made him feel special, loved by God, died. Later he described the impact of the experience on him in a letter to Fred Crowe of December 21st 1976, at the time of the death of Crowe's mother:

The death of your mother keeps reminding me of the death of mine. It was in February 1940. I had been in Europe since 1933. Fr Vincent McCormick, rector of the Gregorian broke the news to me. He did it very nicely but I did not speak for three days. I guess I was in a minor state of shock.

Three months later, on May 1st, the thesis was handed in to the secretariat, suggesting that after suddenly being switched from epistemology, in which field he had been reading, to theology, Lonergan wrote the thesis in almost 18 months. On May 10th, just as Churchill came to power in Great Britain, Germany invaded the Netherlands and Belgium. After a flurry of consultations involving the Jesuit curia Lonergan was assigned an early date for his defence. As things turned out two days before that date he was forced to take the last boat leaving Genoa for New York, the *Conti di Savoia*, his thesis undefended.

Epilogue

It is interesting to note how the two agendas, of *Insight* and *Method in Theology*, which were taking shape in the two chapters of his years in the Gregorian fared. It is my belief that the outbreak of war, which accidentally moved him back to Montreal, enabled him to engage there with the first agenda. After getting his thesis published and doing some intense work on economics he made the decision in 1943 to research the *Verbum* articles. This was followed in 1946 by the decision to compose *Insight*. A major factor in seeing that agenda through was his light teaching load. If, as was originally intended, he had stayed on in Rome in 1940 as a teacher of theology it is difficult to see the path to *Insight* following in quite the same way, if at all.

Somewhat to the dismay of the faculty in Toronto at the request of the General, he returned to the Gregorian in the Autumn of 1953. He began to teach the tracts on the Incarnation and on the Trinity, courses that he had first taken in his student days in Rome. After *Insight* was published in 1957 and he got some notes in place for his courses he now started to address the question of method in theology, initially opened up for him in 1938/9.

In his seminars, “On System and History,” and “On Understanding and Method” he began to explore the nature of theological understanding.

At the beginning of the 60ies Lonergan started to give courses on method in theology. For four years he assembled a huge phantasm but did not have the required insight. It came to him in February 1965 in the Gregorian. So it could be said that the seeds of the project of method in theology were sown and reaped in the Gregorian. The insight into the eight functional specialties in theology, combined with the later insight into the relation between theology and religion, became the basis of the book. In this we see the artistic rhythms of intellectual creativity in his life. He found himself being drawn into the problem of knowledge and as he was engaging with it was opened up to a wider problem. The circumstances of his life direct him back to finish the first problem before moving him to address the second. In the accidents which brought him here in 1933, which moved him from philosophy to theology, opened up the question of method in theology, returned him to Montreal in 1940 and brought him back in 1953 we see, I believe, what Aquinas meant by application clearly at work in Lonergan's life.