

IMPLEMENTATION IN LONERGAN'S EARLY HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPTS

PATRICK BROWN

To be sure, it is possible to overinterpret a text that does not bear the weight of concentrated speculation, but it is also possible to underinterpret a text that is a treasure of beautiful and useful thoughts. Either mistake does an injustice to the author, but the latter is more damaging to the interpreter.

Harvey Mansfield¹

My writings are difficult; I hope this is not considered an objection?

Nietzsche²

Philip McShane's writings are difficult. It is not hard to guess why: They express his own extraordinary achievement of theoretic understanding. For forty-seven years, with relentless perseverance and indomitable courage,³ he has steadily

¹ Harvey C. Mansfield, "Preface," *Machiavelli's New Modes and Orders: A Study of the Discourses on Livy* (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1979), 11-12.

² The sentence forms part of a discarded draft for section three of Nietzsche's late work, *Ecce Homo*. It is quoted in Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1967), 340.

³ I refer here to McShane's recurring appeal to Gaston Bachelard's late-life existential stance. "Late in life, with indomitable courage, we continue to say that we are going to do what we have not yet done: we are going to build a house." Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 61.

climbed that most demanding, grueling, and rewarding of mountains, the mountain of Lonergan's meaning. It is an immense, difficult, and exacting task.⁴ It requires not only relentless perseverance but also "the solitary cultivation of a strange courage."⁵ In the process he has become, as he himself once described Lonergan, an "elder towering in meaning."⁶

McShane's writings are also difficult because they express his own achievement of insight into existential subjectivity,⁷ and for that reason he has become something like a Jeremiah of the Lonergan movement. Again and again, in writing after writing, he insists on reminding us of a dangerous memory and an uncomfortable fact. The dangerous memory is the memory of our own nescience.⁸ The uncomfortable fact is the likelihood

⁴ I remember first meeting Phil at the June 1979 Lonergan Workshop in Boston. He recited for me Hopkins' lines:

O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
May who ne'er hung there.

Gerard Manley Hopkins, *Poetry and Prose*, ed. Walford Davies (London: J.M. Dent, 1998), 86. The climb towards Lonergan's meaning is at the same time an ascent towards self-meaning, to mix two of McShane's early titles.

⁵ McShane, "Modernity and the Transformation of Criticism," *Lonergan's Challenge to the University and the Economy* (Washington DC: UP of America, 1980), 61.

⁶ McShane, "Lonergan's Quest and the Transformation of the Meaning of Life," in *Lonergan's Challenge*, 142. The most recent relevant searchings may be found at the website for the Cantowers project: www.philipmcshane.ca.

⁷ See, for example, McShane's discussion of the four fundamental tensions-in-existence and three related psychopathologies in "Middle Kingdom, Middle Man (T'ien-hsia: I jen)," *Searching for Cultural Foundations* (Lanham, MD: UP of America, 1984), 24-34.

⁸ Nescience is a complex topic about which, I am tempted to say, I know little. Human nescience seems to be deeply related both to our native orientation into mystery and to the refusal of that orientation in favor of "nominalisms, fragmentations, ... scotomae, anxieties, resentments, biases." McShane, "Preface: Distant Probabilities of Persons Presently Going Home Together in Transcendental Process," *Searching for Cultural Foundations*, x. As for the orientation, Lonergan subtly sublates the first line of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* into his own complex heuristic when he writes that "man by nature is oriented into mystery." *CWL* 3, 570. As to refusing that orientation, Lonergan stresses that the "effort to understand is blocked by the pretense that one understands already..." *CWL* 3, 529. On

of personal and group failure in genuineness.⁹

The forgetfulness of nescience and the refusal of genuineness stem in part from what Lonergan calls “the conceptualist illusion.”¹⁰ McShane painstakingly explores how that illusion dominates what he refers to as the present “axial period” of history.¹¹ That illusion forms – or rather, deforms – not only the academic world but also history, including our existential history,¹² and part of McShane’s calling has been to foster a real and painful apprehension of just how deformed our institutions are.¹³ As McShane put the point in a popular lecture in 1968, “The heart of the problem is the radical misconception of the nature of human understanding. Understanding is assumed so often to have been achieved when we have arrived at a name and a facility in using it. But so many of you are virtually trapped into mindlessness by

nescience and “the restoration of mystery,” see McShane, *Process: Introducing Themselves to Young (Christian) Minds* (Halifax, 1990), Appendix 4, “God, Man, Mystery,” 228 (noting that “psychic expansion and the restoration of mystery is a century-long labour”); *id.* (speaking of “the challenge to return reflectively to oneself, to reflectively digest oneself, so as to bring forth a transformed self, mystery-laden and expansive.”)

⁹ Lonergan uses “genuineness” in a technical sense developed in his analysis of the tension of limitation and transcendence inherent in human development. *CWL* 3, 498-503. For an extension of that analysis to the levels of community and history, see Lonergan, “Dialectic of Authority,” 3 *Coll*, 5-12. Communities no less than individuals can “fear the cold plunge into becoming other than one is” and can “dodge the issue.” *CWL* 3, 502.

¹⁰ *CWL* 2, 223.

¹¹ See, e.g., McShane, “Middle Kingdom, Middle Man (T’ien-hsia: I jen),” *Searching for Cultural Foundations*, 8-9.

¹² On “existential history,” see *Method*, 182.

¹³ McShane makes an extended and persuasive case that the rot runs deep. For diagnoses in various contexts, see McShane, “Preface,” *Searching for Cultural Foundations*, xiv-xxii (examining fragmentation and truncation in journalism, management, education, and logic); *id.* “Middle Kingdom, Middle Man,” 4-19 (examining truncations in sciences, scholarship, economics, history); *A Brief History of Tongue: From Big Bang to Coloured Wholes* (Halifax: Axial Press, 1998) (critiquing truncation in linguistic institutions and language sciences); *Pastkeynes Pastmodern Economics: A Fresh Pragmatism* (Halifax: Axial Press, 2002) (detailing the violence perpetrated by truncated views in economics and education as well as the longterm possibilities of recovery).

the modern world's contempt for you, for human meaning."¹⁴

In short, no one is immune from the modern or postmodern varieties of "the conceptualist illusion" or the truncation and alienation it systematically spawns. Even students of Lonergan seem constantly prone "to forget that there does exist an initial and enormous problem of developing one's understanding."¹⁵ Nor has McShane shied from underscoring the uncomfortable fact that there does exist an initial and enormous problem of developing a willingness to face the enormous problem of developing one's understanding.

For decades McShane has patiently and brilliantly thought out the implications of Lonergan's critique of conceptualism.¹⁶ Those implications are both staggering and largely unnoticed. While most of us were content to give a vague notional assent to conceptualism as a counter-position, McShane insisted on a precise and real apprehension with vital implications for personal and institutional living, for biography and history. While most of us were happy to read Lonergan's remark that "the conventional mind is our situation"¹⁷ without actually thinking of our own minds or situations, McShane labored to lay bare the layers of "dead and actively rotting metaphor"¹⁸ at the heart of the modern philosophical traditions in thrall to Scotus.¹⁹ While many theologians were working on "the

¹⁴ McShane, *Process*, Appendix 4, 218; 226.

¹⁵ *CWL* 2, 223

¹⁶ Even this way of naming the disease is afflicted by it, as if the "implications" were logical, the "critique" academic, and "conceptualism" just another in a series of "isms" – instead of a cancer worming its way into the marrow of individuals, institutions, cultures, and histories. I am reminded of Pat Byrne's account of a conversation with Lonergan about Voegelin. Lonergan's comment: "Oh, Voegelin's wonderful. What I call a counter-position, he calls a *disease*!" Something like that stance informs McShane's treatments of the dynamics of fragmentation in the "axial period." See, e.g., McShane, "Preface: Distant Probabilities," *Searching for Cultural Foundations*, iii.

¹⁷ *CWL* 10, 182.

¹⁸ McShane, "Modernity and the Transformation of Criticism," *Lonergan's Challenge*, 71.

¹⁹ See Lonergan's remark that Kant's "critique was not of the pure reason but of the human mind as conceived by Scotus." *CWL* 2, 38-39; *id.*, 39 n.126.

pedagogy of the oppressed" masses, McShane was identifying massively oppressive pedagogy.

Though every movement really needs a Jeremiah, no movement really wants one. And so McShane has spent years proclaiming, to general annoyance and avoidance, the end of academic innocence.²⁰ Or, perhaps, the open travesty of academic guilt:

But the difficulties, as any academic reading this knows in his or her bones, are an all-pervading presence of politics and power, of paranoia and paper, of committees and non-conversations, and, at its deepest, of intellectual necrophilia. I am not here writing about clear instances of corruption. I am writing about the daily flow of talk and tests and memos and meetings in its continual contribution to alienation.²¹

There are those who complain that McShane's writings are annoyingly obscure, difficult, and demanding. Indeed they are. So are Lonergan's writings.²² But the obscurity is not the fault of either.²³ And one has to locate the annoyance where it properly belongs.²⁴

²⁰ See Lonergan, "The Ongoing Genesis of Methods," 3 *Coll*, 156 ("So we come to the end of the age of innocence, the age that assumed that human authenticity could be taken for granted.")

²¹ McShane, "Modernity and the Emergence of Adequate Empiricism," *Lonergan's Challenge*, 83.

²² I am reminded of the Harper and Row editor whose task it was to select the publisher's blurbs for the back cover of the paperback edition of *Insight*. Andrew Reck had written in a review of *Insight* that it was "a profound, incalculably nuanced, and immensely difficult book." But immensely difficult books tend to be a hard sell, so the editor conveniently and silently excised the phrase, "immensely difficult."

²³ I find a remark by Wallace Stevens illuminating in this context. "No one tries to be more lucid than I do. If I do not always succeed, it is not a question of my English, nor of yours, but I should say of something not communicated because not shared." *Letters of Wallace Stevens*, selected and edited by Holly Stevens (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1966), 873. Or one might think of Plato. "A Platonic avatar and a repetition of the dialogues might solve some textual problems but, by and large, it would leave the understanding of Plato exactly where it was." *CWL* 3, 606.

²⁴ Prophets and gadflies are annoying. But the question is why.

The topic of this *Festschrift* is implementation, and its focus is McShane's paper on "Implementation: The Ongoing Crisis of Method." It seems to me that McShane is right to emphasize just how under-noticed and yet how central is the theme of implementation in Lonergan's thought. You tend not to notice that theme unless you know what to look for. But once you know what to look for, it is everywhere you look. McShane's paper helps us to know what to look for. It provides a context for Lonergan's remark in *Insight* regarding the lack of "examples of successful implementation of the explanatory viewpoint."²⁵

What, after all, might "successful implementation" of that viewpoint be? Surely the Lonergan of *Insight* must have had in mind his own prior 14-year struggle to achieve an explanatory viewpoint in economics,²⁶ not to mention his vision of its implementation in "the cultural development that effects a new

Nietzsche offered a compressed explanation in the draft conclusion to an early work.

For the *conclusion*. If these observations have *annoyed* you, then the author can tell you that he anticipated this: but he cannot anticipate the object at which you will direct your annoyance: whether against the author or against yourselves. In the latter – certainly less frequent – instance, the best thing that you could do would be to forget the author completely: what does it matter who has expressed a truth, as long as it was expressed at all and there are people who take it to heart.

Nietzsche, Notebook 29, from the summer-autumn period of 1873, in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche, Vol. XI: Unpublished Writings from the Period of Unfashionable Observations*, trans. Richard Gray (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 219 (emphasis in original).

²⁵ CWL 3, 565. The context is Lonergan's contention that the explanatory viewpoint is not established in the human sciences.

²⁶ From 1930 to 1944, Lonergan worked out the explanatory basis for 'a new science of politics,' or rather, of political economy. See Philip McShane, "Editor's Introduction," CWL 21; Frederick Lawrence, "Editors' Introduction," CWL 15. See also McShane, *Economics for Everyone: Das Just Kapital* (Edmonton: Commonwealth Publications, 1995); *Pastkeynes Pastmodern Economics*; Philip McShane and Bruce Anderson, *Beyond Establishment Economics: No Thank-you Mankiw* (Halifax: Axial Press, 2002).

transformation.”²⁷ Surely, too, he was thinking more broadly of *Insight*'s project itself, the articulation, elaboration, and implementation of “a set of ideas of fundamental importance”²⁸ concerning a normative and critical human science. And he was likely thinking, as well, of how explanatory human science might assist in arresting the short-term and long-term cycles of decline.²⁹ To put it simply, Lonergan's lifelong concern with theory and method was part and parcel of a lifelong concern with effective practice. As I will suggest below, it was a concern with effective practice not only within the natural and human sciences but on the level of our times, on the level of constituting and, in part, directing history.

My remarks touch briefly on three sections of McShane's paper: “Lonergan's Stages of Meaning” (section 10),³⁰ “Theoretic Conversion” (section 8),³¹ and the comment in section 7³² regarding a tradition of Lonerganism that neglects the planning question. But they mainly address section 2, “Implementation of Wisdom in History,” and they mostly relate to the earliest phases of that idea in Lonergan's thought during the 1930s. So while McShane's paper addresses the thematic concern for implementation in Lonergan's thinking in the period from *Insight* to *Method* culminating in functional specialization, I will briefly sketch that concern in its surprisingly vigorous early stages in the context of Lonergan's early writings on history.

²⁷ Lonergan, *CWL* 21, 22; 106. The failure to successfully implement the explanatory viewpoint in economics also has systematic and serious consequences. See *id.*, 110-111; *CWL* 15, 80-86. In particular, as Lonergan remarked with some vehemence in a manuscript from the mid-1930s, “it has landed the twentieth century in an earthly hell.” “Philosophy of History” MS, 99.

²⁸ *CWL* 3, 24.

²⁹ See generally *CWL* 3, Chapter Seven.

³⁰ See pp. 25ff above.

³¹ See pp. 22ff above.

³² See pp. 21 above.

I. Implementation and the Making of History

I saw the oppression that is done under the sun, and
the tears of the innocent. And they had no
comforter: and they were not able to resist this
violence being destitute of help.

Ecclesiastes³³

And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man.

Wordsworth³⁴

In 1970 Lonergan wrote, “I agree with Marx inasmuch as he wants philosophers not only to know but also to make history.”³⁵ That express invocation of Marx’s famous Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach³⁶ certainly seems a startling statement for a thinker long blandly categorized as a transcendental Thomist. One’s immediate instinct is to think of any statement by Lonergan approving Marx as part of the palpable broadening of Lonergan’s thinking in the 1960s. After all, from his early studies in Aquinas on *Grace and Freedom* and *Verbum*,³⁷ Lonergan had broadened his aim to include a study of modern science in *Insight*. From there he had moved on to tackle the complex and vexing questions of interpretation and critical

³³ The words are from Ecclesiastes, 4: 1-3, as quoted by Lonergan in handwritten notes from the early 1930s titled “General Ethic [Metaphysic of Customs].”

³⁴ William Wordsworth, “Lines Written in Early Spring,” *The Essential Wordsworth: Selected by Seamus Heaney* (New York: Galahad Books, 1988), 40-41.

³⁵ From an unpublished reply to a set of papers given at the 1970 Florida conference, quoted in McShane, “Preface: Distant Probabilities,” *Searching for Cultural Foundations*, iii.

³⁶ Karl Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach,” *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker, 2d ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), 145 (“The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it.”)

³⁷ *CWL 1* (originally published in 1941-42); *CWL 2* (originally published 1946-49).

history in the human sciences in *Method*. An encounter with Marx would, then, flow from the later Lonergan's concern with praxis, contemporaneous with his explorations of the fourth level of human consciousness.

But I would like to suggest that this immediate instinctive response, this staid and settled story of Lonergan's development, is quite wrong. Our understanding of Lonergan's development needs to be unsettled.

At some point in his long and brilliant career as an economic, philosophical, and theological theorist and methodologist, Lonergan became concerned with the pervasive oppression of human by human, the violence done to the innocent, the mess man has made of man. But when? For how long had Lonergan agreed with Marx regarding philosophy and the making of history? It may surprise readers to discover that the answer is "at least since 1954," for Lonergan says precisely the same thing about Marx in *Insight*. Moreover, he says it in a highly programmatic context. His whole analysis of the dynamics of historical process in Chapter Seven leads, Lonergan writes, "to the strange conclusion that common sense has to aim at being subordinated to a human science that is concerned, to adapt a phrase from Marx, not only with knowing history but also with directing it."³⁸ In the same context Lonergan speaks of "the vastly ... ambitious task of directing and in some measure controlling ... future history."³⁹ And again: "Just as technical, economic, and political development gives man a dominion over nature, so also the advance of knowledge creates and demands a human contribution to the control of human history."⁴⁰ And yet again: "There is needed, then, a critique of history before there can be any intelligent direction of history."⁴¹

Based on even this simple juxtaposition of texts, it is fair to conclude that Lonergan's 1970 remark about Marx was far more than a rhetorical concession to the *Zeitgeist* of the 1960s or a bow to the aims, if not the means, of liberation theology. It

³⁸ CWL 3, 253. See also *supra*, n.36.

³⁹ CWL 3, 258.

⁴⁰ CWL 3, 253.

⁴¹ CWL 3, 265.

was not simply a stray remark. Rather, it represents the tip of an enormous iceberg. What *Insight* calls “a practical theory of history”⁴² turns out to have been a central and thematic concern of Lonergan even in the early 1950s. And whatever might be “practical” about the theory of history he envisioned, at least we may suspect it is connected in some way to implementation, and implementation in some important way is connected to the possibility of a critical human science.

It is, then, possible – as Fred Crowe once said in a different context – “that in some respects we are dealing, not with a development of Lonergan’s thought, but with a further stage of its manifestation.”⁴³ At the very least we are dealing with a much longer arc of development than one might otherwise expect. For I will suggest that even *Insight* represents the middle of this arc, not its start. Its first manifestations appear in the early or mid-nineteen thirties, in Lonergan’s struggle in his historical manuscripts with Hegel, Marx, and Aquinas.⁴⁴ Not only do those early manuscripts display a conspicuous concern with developing and implementing a theory of history, they also show Lonergan working on fundamental notions that would flower 35 years later in his treatment of “constitutive meaning” and “stages of meaning.” In other words, “implementation” was not a late-breaking concern of the *Method* period. To the contrary. There are grounds for suspecting that something like “implementation of wisdom in history” was Lonergan’s long-term project from the very beginning.

To glimpse the continuity of that project, we need to explore what the early Lonergan calls “man’s making of man,” stages of history, and reflex history.

⁴² *CWL* 3, 258.

⁴³ Fred Crowe, “An Exploration of Lonergan’s New Notion of Value,” *Appropriating the Lonergan Idea* (Washington, DC: Catholic U of America Press, 1989), 51.

⁴⁴ I explored that struggle at some length in an earlier article in this journal. See Patrick Brown, “System and History in Lonergan’s Early Historical and Economic Manuscripts,” *JMDA* 1 (2001), 32-76.

“*Man’s understanding and making of man*”⁴⁵

Human beings are shaped by history and, in turn, shape it. But history, like humans, can be misshapen as well. No one coming of age in the first three decades of the twentieth century could have missed the point. The First World War’s apocalyptic outbreak of senseless mass carnage stripped away a complacent veil and revealed nothing more than, in Ezra Pound’s acid words, “an old bitch gone in the teeth, ... a botched civilization.”⁴⁶ Not only the scale of physical violence astonished and appalled a shocked generation. The scale of what one might call spiritual violence was breathtaking as well. An intimation of that can be glimpsed in Karl Kraus’s article, “Promotional Trips to Hell,” in which he describes an advertisement for packaged tourist trips to Verdun and other famous battlefields of the war. “I am holding in my hands a document which transcends and seals all the shame of this age and would in itself suffice to assign the currency stew that calls itself mankind a place of honor in a cosmic carrion pit.”⁴⁷ As Kraus lamented at the time, “The real end of the world is the destruction of the spirit; the other kind depends on the insignificant attempt to see whether after such a destruction the world can go on.”⁴⁸

The young Lonergan was deeply concerned with the destruction of the spirit and the possibility of its restoration. For by the 1930s what man had made for man was, in Lonergan’s words, “an earthly hell,”⁴⁹ a waking “nightmare.”⁵⁰

⁴⁵ CWL 3, 258. Compare the Lonergan of the historical manuscripts: “The proximate end of man is the making of man... Essentially, history is the making and unmaking and remaking of man...” “Analytic Concept of History,” *MJLS* 11 (Spring 1993), 16.

⁴⁶ Pound, “Hugh Selwyn Mauberly,” *Personae: The Shorter Poems of Ezra Pound*, prepared by Lea Baechler and A. Walton Litz (rev. ed.) (New York: New Directions, 1990), 188.

⁴⁷ Quoted in Harry Zohn, “Introduction,” *In These Great Times: A Karl Kraus Reader* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1984), 16.

⁴⁸ *Id.*, “Promotional Trips to Hell,” 89.

⁴⁹ Lonergan, “Philosophy of History,” MS at 99 (describing the intellectual incompetence or malfeasance of the nineteenth century and noting, “It has landed us in an earthly hell. All the good intentions in the world are compatible with all the blunders conceivable.”) Based on internal evidence, Michael Shute dates the manuscript fragment titled “Philosophy

As Lonergan had come to realize even at this early stage, “The greatest evil in the world is the evil that is concretised in the historic flow, the capital of injustice that hangs like a pall over every brilliant thing ... that culminates in the dull mind and sluggish body of the enslaved people or the decayed culture.”⁵¹ For the early Lonergan, the historical accumulation of irrationality and injustice were facts dominating the objective situation. And these facts, “the inherited capital of injustice,”⁵² were not merely discrete, isolated, or random facts of history; they formed part of an overarching dynamic of history. They were facts in need of theoretic explanation, and they could be explained only on the level of a dialectical philosophy of history that included the objective laws of economics, psychology, sociology, and of material and intellectual progress.⁵³

For the young Lonergan, reversing the concretization of evil in the historic flow required something more than additional concrete insights. What was required was a reorientation of the historic flow, and the needed tool was adequate theory,⁵⁴ a theory of history based on the dynamics of the human mind.

So it seems plausible to suggest that the need for what McShane calls “theoretic conversion” is implicit in Lonergan’s project in the 1930s. Indeed, it borders on an explicit premise of the young Lonergan’s view of the *kairos* of the 1930s. While this is not the place to argue that suggestion at any length, it may be useful to note some of the relevant texts. Here is Lonergan writing around 1934:

of History” to perhaps 1933-34. Shute, *The Origins of Lonergan’s Notion of the Dialectic of History* (Lanham MD: UP of America, 1993), 179.

⁵⁰ “Philosophy of History,” MS at 106.

⁵¹ “Philosophy of History,” MS at 129-130.

⁵² “Philosophy of History,” MS at 129.

⁵³ Letter of January 22, 1935, quoted in Richard Liddy, *Transforming Light: Intellectual Conversion in the Early Lonergan* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 84.

⁵⁴ “Philosophy of History,” MS at 126 (discussing reaction and higher synthesis, and noting, “You can protect the good either by simply sitting back or by advancing with the good; but to advance with the good you have to have a theory of progress and a will to progress; these were lacking.”) See also *id.*, 124-25.

But, whether we like it or not, the world has got beyond the stage where concrete problems can be solved merely in the concrete. Economics supplies us with the most palpable example: you have to have some economic theory in conducting the state... Politics supplies us with another example. ... The sum and substance of the whole issue is that ideas in the concrete will build you a shanty but not a house and still less a skyscraper. The modern situation demands that questions be settled not in the concrete, not by the petty minds of politics...⁵⁵

And again:

Catholic development is by reaction; but reaction may be mere opposition or it may be higher synthesis. That much has been mere opposition was inevitable as long as Catholics did not grasp the significance of intellectual development and the necessary consequences of such intellectual development in social change.⁵⁶

For the young Lonergan, then, the turn to theory is not merely a desirable option or some luxury of the intellectual or scientific classes. It is an outright necessity for reversing the nightmare of present history.⁵⁷ In other words, adequate theory is the only alternative to accelerating decline. Quite simply, any level of advanced practicality requires a level of advanced theory. And while earlier periods of history were not in a position to grasp this theoretic exigence, we are not in a position to avoid it. "Let us transpose this inclination from the tedium of study to the difficulty of discovery; think of a Greek who heard of Icarus and wished to build an aeroplane that was

⁵⁵ "Philosophy of History," MS at 124-25.

⁵⁶ "Philosophy of History," MS at 125. Lonergan's use of "reaction" here pertains to a broader discussion of cultural transference and healthy and unhealthy reaction. For a more developed account of these ideas, see "Analytic Concept of History," 27-28.

⁵⁷ Lonergan, "Pantôn Anakephalaiôis: A Theory of Human Solidarity" [1935], *MJLS* 9 (Fall 1991), 162 ("Is then the situation hopeless? Certainly, unless we settle down, face the facts, and think on the abstract level of modern history.")

not myth; could he have thought of the necessity of first discovering higher mathematics and advanced physics?"⁵⁸

One could trace the theme through what one might call Lonergan's doctrine of method in the 1930s as well.⁵⁹ But perhaps the young Lonergan's view of the relation of theory to planning provides a better illustration. In describing his theory of history, Lonergan writes that initially material and intellectual progress are automatic up to a point, but after that point they are either "deliberate and planned or the end of the civilisation" ensues.⁶⁰

What in the world did Lonergan mean by "deliberate and planned" progress? At least he meant a contrast to our present condition: "Intellectual advance is now conditioned by chance discovery; the progress of man is not a planned and orderly whole but a series of more or less blind leaps."⁶¹ Or again: "For man had to develop from the mere potency of intellect, had to progress under the leadership of phantasms specifying intellect as chance offered them, became unable to plan progress but had to proceed in a series of more or less blind leaps of incomplete acts of intellect."⁶² But he also meant that an adequate dialectical theory of the development of the human mind in history would provide a base for non-random progress and planning: "the function of the applied dialectic of thought is to *anticipate* the need of the objective situation."⁶³ And again: "The direction of the historic flow is an accelerating progress as man passes from the factual more and more into the reflective dialectic."⁶⁴

⁵⁸ "Theory of History," MS at 3. Shute dates this manuscript to c. 1937. Shute, *Origins*, 179.

⁵⁹ See for example Lonergan, "Analytic Concept of History" 17 ("the reflex use of intellect presupposes the discovery of the canons of thought and the methods of investigation").

⁶⁰ Letter of January 22, 1935, quoted in Richard Liddy, *Transforming Light*, 84. The explanation for the curiously staggered rhythm of material and intellectual progress described in the quotation is complex and interesting. See "Analytic Concept of History," 26.

⁶¹ "Pantôn Anakephalaiôis in terms of about 20 ideas" [sic], MS at 1, §5.

⁶² , "Pantôn Anakephalaiôis: A Theory of Human Solidarity" 154.

⁶³ "Philosophy of History," MS at 124 (emphasis added).

⁶⁴ "Philosophy of History," MS at 128.

The phrase “reflective dialectic” refers to Lonergan’s theory of the three stages of history in the historical manuscripts. I will touch on that in a moment. But first I want to comment on the profound continuity between the historical manuscripts and *Insight*. Lonergan’s theory of history from the 1930s centered on what he calls “the making and unmaking of man by man.”⁶⁵ In it he suggested that we have moved beyond the point where our concrete problems can be solved in the concrete.⁶⁶ Similarly, in *Insight* Lonergan argued that the short-sighted practicality of common sense results in long-wave decline. Not only will the resulting decline be unsolvable in the concrete, it cannot be solved by “any idea or set of ideas on the level of technology, economics, or politics.”⁶⁷ To the contrary, it can be solved “only by the attainment of a higher viewpoint in man’s understanding and making of man.”⁶⁸ That making of man is praxis on the level of historical process, and it can only be effective through the attainment and implementation of a higher viewpoint.

The stages of history in the historical manuscripts

Although the early Lonergan does not use the word “praxis,” he repeatedly raises the issue of “the higher control of intellect”⁶⁹ and its implementation as a key issue in historical process. Indeed, he distinguishes between stages of history based on the development of higher controls and the degree of their implementation. I have discussed the three stages of history in the young Lonergan’s historical theory in an earlier article,⁷⁰ and it is not necessary to repeat what I said there. Here let me simply suggest a parallel between those stages and the stages of meaning articulated 35 years later in *Method*.

⁶⁵ Lonergan, “Analytic Concept of History” 10.

⁶⁶ “Philosophy of History,” MS at 124.

⁶⁷ *CWL* 3, 258.

⁶⁸ *CWL* 3, 258.

⁶⁹ “Philosophy of History,” MS at 112. The notion of “higher controls” occurs throughout this manuscript; it is associated first with the emergence of philosophy and then with the sublation of philosophy in the transcendent viewpoint of faith. See, e.g., *id.*, 106; 110; 111; 117; 120.

⁷⁰ Brown, “System and History in Lonergan’s Early Historical and Economic Manuscripts,” 32-76.

In Lonergan's earliest formulation, the first stage of history concerns "the development of mind by material need and social collaboration." Historically, it runs from pre-history through the emergence of the idea of philosophy in Plato. The second stage extends from "the development of philosophy from Plato to the emergence of the idea of a social philosophy." The third stage represents "the development of society under the control of a social philosophy."⁷¹ A year or two later he describes the periods this way: "From the distinction of spontaneous and reflex thought, we have three periods of history: (a) spontaneous history and spontaneous thought; (b) spontaneous history and reflex thought; (c) reflex history and reflex thought."⁷²

II. Implementation and "Reflex History"

Much could be said about the relation between these stages of history (based on a division of different kinds of thought)⁷³ and the stages of meaning in *Method*. One could, for example, develop a clear and obvious parallel. The spontaneous and reflex types of intellectual operation parallel what Lonergan later calls common sense and theory, and so the first two stages of history in the historical manuscripts parallel the first two stages of meaning in *Method*. As Lonergan writes in *Method*: "The discovery of mind marks the transition from the first stage of meaning to the second. In the first stage the world mediated by meaning is just the world of common sense. In the second stage of meaning the world mediated by meaning splits into the realm of common sense and the realm of theory."⁷⁴ Indeed in *Method* Lonergan even emphasizes the

⁷¹ "Philosophy of History," MS at 125.

⁷² Lonergan, "Analytic Concept of History" 10. Notice that in either formulation, the key factor is, in the later language of *Method*, "undifferentiation or differentiation of consciousness." *Method*, 85.

⁷³ Insofar as the human intellect "is a conscious potency, there are two types of intellectual operation: spontaneous and reflex. Since the reflex use of intellect presupposes the discovery of canons of thought and the methods of investigation, it follows that there is first a spontaneous period of thought and second a period of reflex thought." "Analytic Concept of History" 16-17.

⁷⁴ *Method*, 93.

specifically economic and linguistic conditions necessary for the emergence of the second stage,⁷⁵ just as he does in the historical manuscripts.⁷⁶ But rather than construct an elaborate comparison of the two sets of stages, I simply want to draw attention to the role implementation plays in the third stage of each.

In the historical manuscripts, for example, the role assigned to philosophy includes a phase of implementation; there Lonergan writes of “the philosophic stage in which the historical expansion of humanity has its ultimate control in a sound philosophy that is not only sound but also is able to guide the expansion effectively.”⁷⁷ It seems to me difficult to read that passage without noticing that Lonergan is talking about some form of implementation, some form of historical praxis.⁷⁸

Perhaps two additional passages will remove any lingering doubts. In the first, Lonergan has this to say about the stage of reflex history: “The ‘class consciousness’ advocated by the communists is perhaps the clearest expression of the transition

⁷⁵ *Method*, 93, lines 29-32.

⁷⁶ See “Analytic Concept of History” 19, 26 (describing economic conditions necessary for emergence of reflex thought); “Philosophy of History,” MS at 106-107 (describing shift from compact symbol in primitive society to concept in ancient Greece). It is worth noticing that the very same theme is explicit in *Insight*. “Nor would the scientific and philosophic developments themselves have been possible without a prior evolution of language and literature and without the security and leisure generated by technological, economic, and political advance.” *CWL* 3, 559. These ideas from Lonergan’s earliest writings become incorporated into his later framework in important and revealing ways.

⁷⁷ “Philosophy of History,” MS at 101-02.

⁷⁸ The notion of implementation is present in Lonergan’s technical term, “expansion.” A nascent idea is discovered; call it a thesis. The thesis is put into practice and its limitations become apparent. The limitations lead to the discovery of a complementary opposed principle; call it an antithesis. Put into practice, the antithesis too reveals its limitations. “The expansion works some transformation of the data through human action, makes more or less evident the insufficiency of its basic idea, suggests a complementary antithetical idea. This antithesis has its expansion, reveals its insufficiency, and so on to synthesis. But synthesis will not immediately be of sufficient generality, and so we have the process repeated...” “Theory of History,” MS at 3.

from reflex thought to reflex history.”⁷⁹ In the second, he writes of the lag in “actual history” “between man’s discovery of the reflex use of his intellect and his utilisation of this discovery for the systematic planning of the making of man by man.”⁸⁰

Are we in the midst of that lag? How long will that lag last? Is it related to what McShane calls “the axial period” of history? Is metaphysics—the conception, affirmation, and implementation of the integral heuristic structure of proportionate being⁸¹—a form of “reflex thought”? Is self-appropriation? Is functional specialization?⁸² Are these forms of reflex thought relevant to reflex history as “the deliberate and social direction of human activity to its immediate goal: history, the making of man by man”?⁸³ If so, we are back at the issue of planning and the implementation of wisdom in history. We are back at the need for a counterpoise to the concretisation of evil in the historic flow, the mess that man has made of man.

⁷⁹ “Analytic Concept of History” 18. I do not think Lonergan was a Marxist at this or any stage of his career. The view in the historical manuscripts is that communism is the lowest stage in the successively lower syntheses of theory capitulating to practice where practice means whatever happens to be done. On the other hand, he was utterly sympathetic to the notion that a comprehensive, critical, and concrete theory of history could help lift human history out of its present nightmare. And he was utterly critical of the mechanisms by which class and group bias not only create “privileged” and “depressed” classes but also become “the concrete and almost irradicable form of achievements, institutions, habits, customs, mentalities, characters.” “Analytic Concept of History” [MS c. 1936], MJLS 11 (1993), 21-22.

⁸⁰ “Outline of an Analytic Concept of History,” MS at 9. It is extremely important not to read the phrase “systematic planning” from within what Lonergan called “the conceptualist illusion.” See *supra*, n.11. Whatever else it may be, it is a matter of praxis and not technique. See Frederick Lawrence, “Editors’ Introduction,” *CWL* 15, xxxiv-xxxv (quoting comments by Lonergan in 1977).

⁸¹ *CWL* 3, 416.

⁸² See *Method*, 95.

⁸³ “Analytic Concept of History in Blurred Outline,” MS at 8. One should not assume these ideas somehow disappeared in the later Lonergan. *Method* notes that the process of the historically developing human good “is not merely the service of man; it is above all the making of man.” *Method*, 52.

I saw the oppression that is done under the sun, and
the tears of the innocent. And they had no comforter:
and they were not able to resist this violence being
destitute of help.

Conclusion

It has been said of Pound's great work, the *Cantos*, that it was not "a poem written from within modern civilization, but a poem about a break with modern civilization and a search for a new basis."⁸⁴ Perhaps the same can be said of Loneragan's great works, and McShane's. To use McShane's phrase, they are great pastmodern works. They attempt to move past the massive impasses of self-neglect so thoroughly and pervasively concretized in the historic flow. They involve a search for a new basis beyond the centuries-long and brutal colonization of the life-world by a warped conceptualism which daily denies that "man by nature is oriented into mystery."⁸⁵

Patrick Brown teaches in the Seattle University
School of Law, and he can be reached at
brownp@seattleu.edu.

Comments on this article can be sent to
jmnda@mun.ca.

⁸⁴ Forrest Read, "Pound, Joyce, and Flaubert: The Odysseans," in *New Approaches to Ezra Pound*, ed. Eva Hesse (Berkeley: U of California P, 1969), 127.

⁸⁵ *CWL* 3, 570.