

# LonerганLetter

DECEMBER 2007

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## • REFLECTION

### Reflections on the Seminar on Augustine's *De Trinitate*

Looking back on our nearly two years study of St. Augustine's masterpiece on the divine Trinity, two things remain particularly strong with me. First, the experience of following this great intellect and holy man in his attempt to penetrate as deeply as possible the mystery of the divine relationships, refuting the errors of his day, throwing light on sacred scripture, and examining various analogies of the Trinity in human experience. Augustine realized that his success would be limited by the very nature of the problem, but felt that the attempt was well worth the effort, as did those of us who took this journey with him. For all who love God will seek to know Him better.

The second lasting impression is the delight in my companions on the journey, in our lively discussions, our frequent digressions on various spiritual by-ways, our seeking always for a deeper understanding of the ways of God and man. That this was done always, even in disagreement, with respect and indeed with Christian love, was a source of great gratification to me. I believe that this shared study also brought much grace to us all, recalling Jesus' words "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them".

- Dr. Ron Vardiman

## • IN MEMORIAM

## SEMINARS

### • Augustine's Theology of the Trinity in *De Trinitate*

This Saturday 10:30 a.m. seminar, which first convened on April 29, 2006, concluded its discussions on November 10, 2007. When the Lonerган *Insight* seminar began to meet biweekly on January 20, 2007, this seminar also adopted a biweekly schedule, meeting on alternative Saturday mornings. A new Trinity seminar is scheduled to begin on January 26, 2008, a seminar that will read through Lonerган's *The Triune God: Systematics*. As with the St. Augustine seminar, it will meet biweekly on Saturday mornings.

### • Voegelin's *Order & History*, vol. 3, *Plato and Aristotle*

This once a month Saturday afternoon seminar continues its work with the help of **Joanne Tetlow, J.D., Ph.D.**, the seminar leader, who reports as follows about what had been done over the last year:

It has been a fruitful year of study in Voegelin's interpretation of Plato's works. We have studied Plato's *Symposium*, *Apology*, *Gorgias*, *Republic* and *Statesman* and will finish 2007 with *Timaeus* and *Critias*. After tackling Plato's *Laws* in 2008 we will move on to Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics*. The larger part of *Order & History*, vol. 3 is devoted to an analysis of Plato, because of Voegelin's transcendental theory of myth, revelation, and philosophy. However, Voegelin's empirical tenet that politics is about the concrete historical existence of man's consciousness in society relates well to Aristotelian thought.

In August 2007, **Dr. David J. Walsh** presented a lecture on a paper and later published article entitled, "Voegelin's Place in Modern Philosophy." Apparently, Voegelin chose not to avail himself of contemporary interaction and criticism of his massive philosophical project. As a result, according to Walsh, Voegelin may not have appreciated the achievement of modern philosophy, e.g. the reversal of the assumption that epistemology precedes metaphysics, the priority of practical reason over theoretical reason, and ethics before ontology.

The breadth and depth of Eric Voegelin's work will keep us stimulated and challenged intellectually and spiritually for years to come. Voegelin's belief that truth is at the level of being and not ideas gives his philosophy of consciousness and participation an immediate appeal to the human encounter with political reality.

### • Lonerган's *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*

This seminar, which began meeting biweekly on January 20, 2007, continues to meet on a biweekly basis with occasional departures from the regular schedule as circumstances warrant. However, in a new development, this seminar is led by Dr. David Fleischacker from his home in Fort Wayne, Indiana through a live Skype conference connection call using computers and the Internet. For each class, it has been possible to post notes and a podcast of the proceedings on [www.lonerган.org](http://www.lonerган.org).

### • Special Seminar - Phyllis Wallbank MBE

On March 24, 2007, in the Fort Augustus Room of St. Anselm's Abbey, from 10 am to 12 pm, Mrs. Phyllis Wallbank MBE hosted a question and answer session for educators and parents. The seminar was attended by persons who wanted to ask specific questions about pedagogical problems as these are commonly encountered in working with young people.

## LECTURES

### • Fr. James Wiseman

On March 24, 2007, Fr. James Wiseman OSB, author of *Spirituality and Mysticism: A Global View*, and Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies, School of Theology and Religious Studies, Catholic University of America, gave a talk in our *Sedes Sapientiae* Lecture Series: "Doing Theology with the Help of Bernard Lonerган's Eight Functional Specialties."

### • Br. Dunstan Robidoux

In Seoul, South Korea, at the invitation of Dr. Chae Young Kim of Sogang University, Br.



Isaac Arokiasamy

I want to remember Isaac for his friendship and rare example. One thing that is often coming to mind about him is the degree to which his mind was constantly at work in finding ways to help those in need to the utmost of his strength. Though he was barely able to walk toward the end of his life, he was still on a fairly regular basis finding ways to come to the aid of others, to edify, to exhort and to uplift.

I remember him barely able to rise from his bed sending off money he had saved up for an emergency to one of the nuns who called him uncle, who was crying because it was cold in the new place she was and she had no jacket. He accomplished much though barely able to walk about. He never gave up until the end when the options just closed. He remained strong, seeking, laboring. And he was always graciously thankful for the slightest things you did for him. "Thanka-thanka – thanka."

He had a dignity about him, though he was often embarrassingly honoring of you. His thanking you was part of his life principles. His dignity extended to how he dressed and to the fine words he had always ready on his lips. Sometimes they were very simple but coming from him at times they took on a peculiar force. He quoted a number of times from his sister "Read, but also share" and somehow that penetrated the armor of my dimwittedness. Other sayings: "If you label me, you negate me." "Real living is meeting." He looked for the choice word in the great writers that he was constantly reading and relating to the living of life.

- David Alexander

## • COMMUNICATIONS

This year brought together readers of Lonergan's *Insight* from various parts of the world through Skype conference calling, podcasts and online notes on [www.lonergan.org](http://www.lonergan.org). The success of linking participants in this seminar promises more development in e-learning and professional collaboration during

Dunstan Robidoux OSB gave a number of talks over the course of a week's visit to Korea which began on April 16. On April 17, Br. Dunstan gave a brief talk about Lonergan's understanding of aesthetics at the opening of a special Buddhist art exhibition which featured the religious paintings of a Buddhist nun. On April 18, a more lengthy lecture about Lonergan's understanding of aesthetics was given to the faculty of the Department of Religious Studies at Sogang University. On April 20, at a Benedictine convent of nuns who operated a Montessori kindergarden, two lectures were given on "Lonergan, Wallbank, and Fleischacker on Education."

Then, on April 22, two seminars were given at a newly founded Korean pedagogical institute whose name literally translates as the "Happiness Making Place." One was devoted to Lonergan's *Insight*, the other, Lonergan's *Method in Theology*. At all these talks, translations into Korean were provided by Dr. Chae Young Kim.

### • Mr. Roland Krismer

On Saturday August 25, 2007, in the conference room of the Lonergan Institute, **Mr. Roland Krismer** (from Innsbruck, Austria) gave a lecture: "**Some Personal Notes in the Context of the Difference between theoretical and Practical Reason in Aquinas...**A talk based on personal experience..." About the nature of this talk and what it was to discuss, Mr. Krismer had written:

In other words, how can ethics serve as a means which would allow us to effect another kind of transcendence, a transcendence which would move us beyond a kind of prison which can exist in our current, possibly critical understanding of contemporary culture and how it has developed? Every human culture acts as a determinism which influences and directs how persons should think and act toward one another in the context of a given social order. However, can a better understanding of the principles basic to the nature of moral or ethical life, as this was grasped by Aquinas in his analysis of the life of the practical reason, lead us to a more optimistic sense of real human possibilities in how we can relate to each other? The context is a shift from truth and being and with what already exists toward a focus which attends to what can be brought into being. How is one form of consciousness distinguished from the other? From the viewpoint of practical reason, what limitations exist with respect to the life of theoretical human reason?

### • Dr. Paul St. Amour

On November 10, 2007, Dr. Paul St. Amour, an Associate Professor of Philosophy (Contemporary Thomism) based at St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia, gave a talk in our *Sedes Sapientiae* Lecture Series: "*Prudentia* in the Modern Context."

## FEATURE ARTICLE

### The Science of Metaphysics? Is it needed today?

by David Fleischacker

*Classical Metaphysics was the science of Being. A number of modern philosophers argued that this science was no longer possible*

Many of us probably conceive of metaphysics according to the categorizations given to it by the local bookstore, where "astrology" and other exotica may be lumped into this category. In such a context, I thought I might introduce this long-lost genuinely scientific discipline, which has much to offer us today when we may be too focused on our own areas of interest to understand the connections with other areas.

Metaphysics as a science in ancient and medieval times is associated with two major figures, Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas (who wrote a commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*). For these two figures, metaphysics is "the science of being," and what it imparted to the person who possessed this science was wisdom. What this discipline resulted in is a general view "of all that is," a general worldview of the totality of all reality.

Though arguably everyone possesses some notion of being (or reality), what is precisely meant by this varies. Modern philosophers have been divided over the topic, many (e.g., Immanuel Kant) thinking a science of being no longer relevant or possible, at least as traditionally formulated.

*Metaphysics leads to a critical and creative world-view.*

Others began to redefine it but in the end placed it in a privatized coffin and buried it deep—perhaps waiting for Barnes and Noble to reawaken it as the field of strange phenomena. Certainly, the lack of its presence in today's universities indicates that few take it seriously as

2008.

Over the past summer, the Institute's website was completely redesigned with enhanced search capabilities. Visitors to the site can access ten years of content from seminar notes, online books, and the online journal, [The Living Cosmopolis](#).

As always, Br. Dunstan continues to keep everyone in the loop regarding upcoming events and assignments, using the listserv, and most recently, the Institute's new blog: [www.lonergan.org/blog](http://www.lonergan.org/blog).

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a science.

***Bernard Lonergan, S.J., has recovered and transposed metaphysics as a science for the modern and post-modern world.***

Bernard Lonergan has accomplished an amazing recovery and transposition of metaphysics within the modern and post-modern context. In four chapters toward the end of *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, Lonergan developed both the methods, purpose, and nature of metaphysics in light of contemporary science and civilization. Metaphysics, he proposes, develops a generic account of all that exists, of

all the relationships between things from sub-sub-atomic quarks to large scale societies and cultures. It will bring together in a generic fashion all that has been accomplished in culture, in the arts, in the sciences, and in civilization as a whole.

Most scientists, philosophers, and theologians have some sense of the inter-relations between the fields of knowledge. Biologists clearly realize that organisms are chemical. Chemists realize that they are related to physicists, psychologists to neurobiologists. Math is closely allied to all these fields. At the same time, many sense close, though usually vague, alliances between art and literature, human life, and the sciences. What metaphysics is called to do is make these interrelations explicit, highlighting both the methods and objects of study in a particular discipline, and relating these to the ways of life throughout a culture. The results of this critical and creative interdisciplinary work issue in a generalized worldview that integrates all the sciences as well as all human endeavors.

The development of such an integrating worldview allows metaphysics to become involved in stewarding those disciplines and ways of life in a more critical and creative manner. Since metaphysics critically and creatively understands the relationship of all fields of study and all ways of life, it is best suited for analyzing, evaluating, critiquing and forecasting the unfolding developments of all fields of study and ways of life, especially as these relate to each other into a unity called human civilization. The worldview developed in metaphysics thus is best suited for mediating the long term-development of the arts, sciences, and civilization. In short, it would help to promote long-term growth and to hinder long-term decline of human civilization. This is what is meant by a stewardship of history. Such long-term mediation is part of the natural wisdom that Aristotle and Aquinas upheld as one of the supreme human virtues that human beings should seek.

***Metaphysics leads to a critical and creative integration and transformation of all human civilization***

However, we should add a note of warning. Lonergan continues in *Insight* to discuss the limitations of such a science, and the community that needs to exist for it to flourish, which he calls Cosmopolis. It will be merely one philosophy among a cacophony of philosophies. It will not be able to reverse the trends of inauthenticity, the personal and communal failures to overcome intellectual, moral, and religious distortions. In other words, it cannot bring itself into existence nor can it maintain itself. It is similar to Augustine's warning that the moral and intellectual virtues do not, in fact, have the power to bring forth the healing of deformed souls and civilizations. What is needed is some form of incarnate mediation that establishes a higher order that has its source in the Self-Subsistent One. This is the point of Chapter 20 on Special Transcendent Knowledge. Only a community rooted in gifts of Divine self-communication can effectively provide the context for a true cosmopolis and an authentic science of metaphysics.

***Intellectual Pride destroys metaphysics and the cosmopolitan community in which it has its life, leaving history without stewards.***

Perhaps one of the most challenging distortions that is often born in the midst of the intellectual life was one about which John Henry Newman repeatedly warned his intellectually disposed readers. It is the severe danger of intellectual pride. One can see it in the fall of Abelard. One can see its control over the universities as scholasticism fell just before the Renaissance and the Reformation. One can see it operative again in the intellectual circles of the 19th and 20th centuries. Even with Revelation, such pride seems nearly impossible to overcome. Yet without it, there simply is no hope. Still, on the other hand, such dangers do not mitigate the call to love our neighbors and our world, and the call to become stewards over the whole of creation, including history. In the end, Revelation calls us to love and build a civilization of love. For some of us, building metaphysics and cosmopolis may just be that call.

• I would like to thank my colleague here at the University of Saint Francis, Adam DeVille, for his editorial modifications to this essay. - DPF

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## • CONTACT US

The Lonergan Institute for the "Good Under Construction" is headed by **Br. Dunstan Robidoux OSB**, Vice-Director, and **David Fleischacker**, Director. It is located in St. Anselm's Abbey at 4501 South Dakota Avenue, Washington, DC 20017,

The Institute's phone number is 202-269-6650 and the email address is [lonergan@lonergan.org](mailto:lonergan@lonergan.org).

The idea of the Institute developed, in part, from the reading and discussion groups that have been established since the fall of 1993. From reading Lonergan, a larger project has sprung.

Since 1997, the Institute has been a 501(c)3 non-profit organization which gratefully accepts donations. If you would like to donate funds to the Institute please [click here](#) or call 202-269-6650.

Also, with addresses changing frequently, we try to stay as updated as possible.

If there have been changes to your mailing or e-mail addresses, or if you know others who may be interested in subscribing to the Lonergan Institute mailing list, please [click here](#).

• **Alexander Caruso** spent most of the fall in Korea. Alex has been teaching students in Korea over the Internet from his home in College Park, MD, and spent nearly three months abroad. He plans to marry **Amy Gorman** in 2008.

• **Kieran Dickinson** and **Courtney Gebhard** in April were married at the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception at Mount Saint Mary's University in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Kieran and Courtney honeymooned in Positano and Rome, where they and other pilgrims attending the Wednesday audience were blessed by **Pope Benedict**.

• **Joanne Tetlow, J.D., Ph.D.** is currently a Tax Consultant-Attorney for the Comptroller of Maryland, Annapolis, Maryland.

## CONFERENCES

### • Innsbruck, Austria

An informal Lonergan colloquium convened in Innsbruck, Austria from Dec. 27, 2006 to January 2, 2007 and was hosted by Mr. Roland Krismer. Br. Dunstan Robidoux OSB, Anthony Russo, Fr. Linus Kpalap, and Dr. Chae Young Kim from Seoul, Korea attended.

### • Mainz, Germany

The 3rd International Lonergan Workshop was held in Mainz, Germany January 2 to January 7. Mr. Roland Krismer and Br. Dunstan Robidoux OSB attended along with Fr. Linus Kpalap, Anthony Russo, and Dr. Chae Young Kim.

### • Boston, Massachusetts

The 34th annual Lonergan Workshop titled, "The 'Not Numerous Center': For Insight's 50th Anniversary and Method in Theology's 35th Anniversary" was held on June 17-22, at the Lonergan Institute, Boston College, and was hosted by the Workshop's director and founder, Dr. Fred Lawrence. Dr. David Fleischacker, Br. Dunstan Robidoux, S.R. O'Brien, and Dr. Ron Vardiman attended.