

## The Deed; The Seed

I recall now a bump in the road in Euclidean geometry: no need to get into the particular proposition, but know that it was called *The Bridge of Asses*. In the broad sweep of our business in this series it connects with the fifth chapter of *Insight*, which begins by pointing to the chapter as “a natural bridge”<sup>1</sup> to really get into the meaning of common sense. We are not taking that route here, a route that would push us to a very difficult version<sup>2</sup> of the exercise named in the first essay, an Ass or *Assembly* route that would embolden us as a group to admit being quite lost in that bridge-chapter of *Insight*. The route I invite us to take here is to take as our bridge problem a readable book by Fr. Fred Crowe, *The Theology of the Christian Word: A Study in History*.<sup>3</sup> It is an invitation you can skip quite easily: you neither have the book nor the time nor the background nor whatever. Then on you go to the suggestion of the third essay. But I do hope some folks take up this problem, and indeed that you read on here for a bit to get a better sense of the general struggle.

What is that general struggle? It is the struggle to make a start of the cyclic collaboration that Lonergan viewed as key to the rescue of philosophy, theology and to giving rise to a successful culture of “resolute and effective intervention in this historical process”<sup>4</sup> “at a rather critical moment in the historical process.”<sup>5</sup> The short case for the particular start named in the previous essay is made in my website article, “[Method in Theology: ASAFACT](#).”<sup>6</sup> Briefly, AS refers to the key task named in the previous essay: Assemble some suggested piece of theological progress and do the group thing described there. AF refers to Affirming the piece as fitting into the foundational perspective conducive to effective intervention; the affirmation is a

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<sup>1</sup> *Insight*, 163.

<sup>2</sup> See note 2 of *LO and Behold 3*.

<sup>3</sup> Paulist Press, 1978.

<sup>4</sup> *Phenomenology and Logic*, CWL 18, 306.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 300.

<sup>6</sup> The essay is also the center-piece of the second chapter of my recent book, [The Future: Core Precepts in Supramolecular Method and Nanochemistry](#) (Vancouver: Axial Publishing, 2019).

poise of some part of group doing the exercise. ACT refers to getting on the move in some way: a personal shift to come telling result.

The present exercise names the book by Crowe as the take-off point, the *Assembled*. We skip the other italicized pieces of Lonergan's program for dialectic, and we each have a shot at teasing out what we think is worth a follow-through with this book or our improvement on its suggestions. What level of shot? That is up to you. The shot might range from musing over the table of contents to doing the full heavy work of detailed reading. The important thing is The Deed: getting into The ACT. A help to that "getting into" is having a motivating glimmer on the seeding effect the ACT leading to the beginning.

It is the matter of an Act Won that will go from seedy first efforts to a full flowering of the precise collaboration that is to lift the "Standard Model" of investigation into any area of inquiry. The Standard Model may be quite sophisticated and successful, as in present physics, or pretty shabby, as in present linguistics, psychology, theology: but the ACT will work: it has a "guiding form, statistically effective."<sup>7</sup>

So, here I am inviting you to join or form a group,<sup>8</sup> or a least join me (at [pmcshane@shaw.ca](mailto:pmcshane@shaw.ca)) in tackling the question: Does Crowe's book find some place in our thinking out the future on our zone, in The Field?

The marvel of Lonergan's strategy is that each of us can begin with a somewhat vague notion of the "field"<sup>9</sup> or "the place"<sup>10</sup> in it. We have certainly a "horizon" but it can a stance of inquiry that is pretty *voraussetzunglos*. The strategy carries into the task of finding better where we stand: no mystery here—you find from the start in the exercise that you are pushed and pushing to check a fit or misfit: but into WHAT? I capitalize the WHAT, apiece of the broader **what** in you I regularly name, in *The Future*, your *W-enzyme*. Don't be put off by that word, or the use of the word *word* in the phrase "Christian word of God"<sup>11</sup> that occurs in the first three lines of Crowe's book. Think of your W-enzyme as simply an approach to the print that distinguishes you from the ape in the zoo or the dog at your feet. You have an approach to the print and as you

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<sup>7</sup> I quote from the central paragraph on the question "What is Progress?" in Lonergan's 1934 *Essay in Fundamental Sociology*, from page 20 of Michael Shute, *Lonergan's Early Economic Research*.

<sup>8</sup> You can check with James Duffy <[humanistasmorelia@gmail.com](mailto:humanistasmorelia@gmail.com)>

<sup>9</sup> *Phenomenology and Logic*, CWL 18, 199.

<sup>10</sup> The final chapter of book referenced in note 6 talks of the complex of places or situations.

<sup>11</sup> *Theology of the Christian Word*, 1. In future I refer to this work simply as 'Crowe'.

bump along you will beholdenly<sup>12</sup> find that you are bumped up by this ASSing around, so that we can pick up on Crowe's first page musings: we are "a series of approaches, with one leading to the other, and the whole series perhaps pointing only at some future date to a more systematic conception,"<sup>13</sup> where *conception* is a vague naming, as indeed too is *systematic*.<sup>14</sup>

The vagueness is shaken up and upwards by our efforts in the first and second objectifications named in the exercise, the *Duffy Exercise* as it is called.<sup>15</sup> No harm, methinks, in my repeating the offensive defensive dialectic overture here, from our first essay, with the note there also repeated:

Horizons.

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

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

There is a final objectification of horizon when the results of the foregoing process are themselves regarded as material, when they are assembled, completed, compared, reduced, classified, selected, when positions and counterpositions are distinguished, when positions are developed and counterpositions reversed.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Best just repeat note 8 of the previous essay: "This is a quite difficult complex of suggestions, especially in this shabby ending of the negative anthropocene. The reach for an integral perspective on the suggestion will help towards getting to grips not only with our title and our stumbling sequence but with the entire cyclic project envisaged by Lonergan: the emergence of characters of progress (*Essay in Fundamental Sociology, Lonergan's Early Economic Research*, edited with commentary by Michael Shute, University of Toronto Press, 2010, 20) and characters of charity (*ibid.*, the entire page 43). "Blessed are they ...." A quite different culture is needed to lay all cards on the table and be bluntly, if kindly, corrected, and end up climbing forward as 'beholden'."

<sup>13</sup> Crowe, 1.

<sup>14</sup> I recall a conversation with Lonergan in the 1970s, about one of his expert and respected followers, where Lonergan remarked—the exclamation mark was in his voice, "he has no system!"

<sup>15</sup> For more information on the *Duffy Exercise*, you can check with me ([pmcshane@shaw.ca](mailto:pmcshane@shaw.ca)) or with jamesduffy<[humanistasmorelia@gmail.com](mailto:humanistasmorelia@gmail.com)>

<sup>16</sup> *Method in Theology*, 1972, 250(2018, 234). I lay it out in a handy format of the lines 18–33 of the 1972 edition. Line 18 begins with the end word of a sentence, *horizons*, which poses the question nicely for each of us. I would note that I have considered this piece of text in various useful contexts. For example,

The notion that this is all pretty vague, where this refers either to this little one-day essay, or Crowe’s long book, or your longer years in theology, may both startle you and console you. What IS your theology? If you are a Christian, yes, you can bring forth a commonsense meaning of a creed, but can you spin it out coherently into a sound system, even twirl it up to be a “*regina scientiarum*, not merely a constitutional monarch”?<sup>17</sup> Now there, to quote Crowe’s first page again, is “some future date”!

The task before you is to talk coherently, ASS, about Crowe’s effort in such a way as to bring forward to yourself your AF, some coherence in your own view, especially as you get into the second objectification and try to say where it might lead. Doing that gets you in on the ACT.

You can even get in on the ACT without getting past the first page of Crowe: there he points out the shot he is going to have at dealing with what was “simply the message of good news, if indeed it had a name at all at the time. Form this beginning it moves forward through various stages that it is the purpose of this book to delineate.”

So you can puzzle broadly, with your horizon, about whether such a delineation would be a good reach—your first objectification—and then go on to say how you would view its further pursuit.<sup>18</sup> I wisely halt here by pitching to you Crowe’s great pitch for this effort, a pitch with which he concludes his little book on page 149:

When you have a mountain to move, and only a spade and a wheelbarrow to work with, you can either sit on your hands or you can put spade to earth and move the first sod. Someday, if others have the same idea, the mountain will be moved – and restructured. Some day, too, I hope, theology will be restructured according to a method that operates on the level of our times; this book is meant to be a spadeful of earth in the moving of the mountain.

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there is the context of chapter 12, “Dialectic and the Notion of Being” in *The Allure of the Compelling Genius of History*, where the text is reproduced on pages 145–46. There is a comprehensive treatment of a full context of the text in “The Coming Convergence of World Responsiveness,” *Divyadaan: Journal of Philosophy and Education* vol. 30, no. 1 (2019). There is the context of the disturbing essay, “A Paradigmatic Panel for (Advanced) Students (of Religion),” an article on my website. My recent venture lifts the text into the quite new context of effectively engineering the global future: [\*The Future: Core Precepts in Supramolecular Method and Nanochemistry\*](#) (Vancouver: Axial Publishing, 2019).

<sup>17</sup> *Phenomenology and Logic*, CWL 18, 126.

<sup>18</sup> Think concretely of this difficulties and perhaps the embarrassment of this process. How precise are you about your viewpoint, your personal Standard Model? I shall return to this problem in the fifth essay in this series.