

Bridgepoise 10

The Liberal Arts as the Core of Future Science: Part Two

Prenote: Recall Bridgepoise 3, which I now designate as Part One of this essay. This essay was the key note address at the 2010 Liberal Arts Conference in St. Thomas' University, Frederick, New Brunswick.

The unfortunate absence of Henry Giroux reduces the troublemakers at this important gathering to three. Just kidding. But might I say it reduces the experts to three, where expert is given the cheeky or tongue-in-cheeky meaning of an S.O.B. from out of town? Of course, that only covers two of us!

But no, seriously speaking, I suspect that we are not seen as troublemakers, but allies, allies facing a large problem that concerns everyone here. Where are the liberal arts going, and where might they go in this next century in order to bail us out of the present mess of economics and government and lead us globally forward? I echo Henry Giroux's paper as expressed in his summary, a summary that promised some getting-to-grips with flawed subjectivity in a manner that related to politics and economics. The other three papers come strangely together in dealing with aspects of flawed subjectivity, Ronald Wright demanding a lift out of parochialisms and Dorothy Smith a shift to seriously "thinking things through," and in my own case, a move to put a missing heart back into science.

My paper was to follow Giroux's and now it seems to me to lack that broad context. My paper was something of a mood setter, and I will be intimating that mood at the formal start of my address by quoting what I consider a poem central to our problem, a poem by a Korean lady drawing attention screamingly to the trampled quest and question in each of us. The mood I am talking about is the mood of all great art, a reach and an invitation that blossoms from our lonely molecules. But is that mood not relevant to great science? My claim was, and is, that great science must live in that

mood, and the teaching and practice of science must live in that mood.

But perhaps my claim loses me some of the allies that I presuppose in the audience? We shall see about that as we move to discussion, but I suspect that, on the whole, we are preaching to the choir here. Something is lacking in present paradigms of science, and both Giroux and I focus in particular on the science of economics especially in its political impact. Giroux might well have gone to a broader sweep regarding the neoliberal corruption of inquiry, but I certainly did not in my mood-generating paper.

So, here and now I risk supplementing that paper, written many months ago, with what I might call a Part Two of it. Or is it Part One? Certainly it is, for those who have not read the other Part! I reach for a broader and more elementary context, not only for my previous paper, but for our searchings during these days. And what do I mean by *searchings* here? If we take Ronald Wright's critique of parochialism seriously, and his plea for a larger aesthetic education, and if we take Dorothy Smith seriously about "thinking things through", then we certainly have a challenge to meet not just here but afterwards if we are not to just be parochial and conventional in our sharing. To be parochial and conventional would be to follow the conventions about conventions: to get back to business as usual after the gathering, making sure perhaps that papers are suitably published. That is certainly thinking within a box, to echo the usual phrase touched on by Dorothy Smith. Dorothy would rightly have us leave Kansas and seek for creative wizardry on some promising yellow brick road. She has good things to say about the St. Thomas community and there is the hope expressed in the concluding sentence of her summary, which I think worth quoting now in full.

"In recognizing the importance of St. Thomas's commitment to critical thought and social conscience I think now not just of what a liberal arts education provides for students but of those I know and have known here who as members of faculty have been able to explore original lines of thinking and to exercise conscience and intellectual leadership rare in contemporary university conditions."

There we have our challenge. Wouldn't it be both hilarious and mischievous if

we here, on the edge of the American Empire - some of whose inhabitants may well think we live in igloos in New Brunswick - were to come up with a cultural shift that met the needs of a tormented Gaia in a new aesthetic global *eco-nomos*?

But now I had best get on to the more formal pointing, with sufficient brevity to allow for the light and heat of discussion.

I begin the formal presentation with what should strike you as an odd quotation from a film titled *Wit*. The speaker is a cancerous professor of English, a John Donne expert magnificently portrayed by Emma Thompson, who also co-wrote the screenplay of the 2001 film with Mike Nichols, the Director. It is the filming of a play by Margaret Edson. But let us not get lost in detail. The dying professor is bewailing in her solitude the tone of her previous conversation with her nurse, and more generally the disemboweling hold of what may be called the abstract. Here are her words, words we may consider as addressed to us as we move into the topic of the future of the liberal arts.

“We are discussing life and death and not in the abstract, either. We are discussing my life and my death. And I cannot conceive of any other tone. Now is not the time for verbal thought-play. Nothing would be worse than a detailed scholarly analysis of erudition, interpretation, complication. Now is the time for simplicity. Now is the time for, dare I say it, kindness.”

The question that I wish to raise and answer with a death-bed Yes is, “Is our present academic culture cancerous?” With that Yes goes the sentiment expressed by Emma Thompson in her role as cancer-patient. I repeat a piece of her speaking: “Now is not the time for verbal thought-play. Nothing would be worse than a detailed scholarly analysis of erudition, interpretation, complication. Now is the time for simplicity. Now is the time for, dare I say it, kindness.”

All the speakers focus in different ways on the cultural cancer, and I shall enlarge on that as we move along. My own focus is on the existential objecting to the cancer that

is present in genuine art, symbolized by the poem that is central to my other paper, from which I now quote. It is a recent poem of a Korean woman, translated into English, and its beginning reads as follows:

“Someone is taking out
 a question from a question mark.
 Question that flew like a chicken feather,
 question that gave its body to the wind,
 question that stripped naked,
 question that painted the entire body,
 question with a hidden face,
 question that cried.

 A period that has lost its tail
 cries silently.
 Now someone draws near a period
 and tries to shove in
 a fallen question.”¹

How do I read that poem herenow, **how** do you hear it? Is our reading and listening cancered? I have claimed that it is. Our questioning bones and nerves cry silently in a period that has lost its tale, t-a-l-e. What is this cancer? Can we diagnose what is at the academic heart of it? And if we can, still, it cannot be done in these few days of our searching. I risk claiming that the problem is a massive failure of at least seven centuries of Western intellectual culture. But if we indeed can skimpily detect its

¹I am quoting the beginning and end of the poem “A Question Mark” written by the Korean poetess Kim Hyesoon (b. 1955): *Anxiety of Words: Contemporary Poetry by Korean Women*, translated by Don Mee Choi, Zephyr Press, Brookline MA, 2006, 83. The Korean version is on the opposite page.

rotten heart, then the few days may give us a sense of the task, may help each of us to identify zones, skin-festerings, of manifest failure, and even lead us to sniff out directions of reorientation. And this, you will have noticed, is what the four principal speakers of our meeting seek to point towards in a consensus born, not of collaboration but of a common sensitivity both to evident misdirections and to the turn of culture needed to escape the present mess. The titles speak for this claim. All is not at all well within present parochialism, within the pretentiousness of conventions of higher education. So we need a “rethinking” that must be a “thinking it through”. Best, perhaps, repeat the full titles of the four papers: Henry Giroux’s contribution was to have been “Beyond Bailouts: Rethinking the Neoliberal Subject Higher Education”. Dorothy Smith speaks under the crisp title “Thinking it Through”. Ronald Wright takes up the issue of “The Future of the Past: Escaping the Parochialism of the Present”. My own present effort can be considered as a First or Second Part to my original paper, “Liberal Arts: The Core of Future Science.”

Center stage there is to be thinking and rethinking. But what do we, you and I, mean by those words? Are we, perhaps, deeply and firmly cancered in our academic view of thinking, of critical thinking, of constructive and reconstructive thinking? And if we are, or even if we are not, it seems to me that there is a definite advantage in moving into what might be considered non-academic zones of thinking to seek a new edge to our thinking about thinking. So I suggest that we step away from conventional considerations of thinking - or wittily should I not say dance away? I am interested, then, more in Nijinski’s leaps than in Newton’s Principles.

Before I go on I would note again that it seems to me that I am speaking here to the converted, I am preaching, so to speak, to the choir. If you are in the world of aesthetic experience then leaps are the order of the day and deductive thinking is even looked upon as a mistaken world. And indeed, so it is: deductive reasoning is a sort-of fallout from leaping. So, for example, I would claim that Newton leaped, but when he came to write he was trapped in convention, one that goes right back to that great

scientific leaper, Archimedes. Recall Archimedes famous leap out of the bath, naked, with his cry of *Eureka!* He had found how to detect cheating in the matter of a crown's gold. But when he wrote up the topic, in that uniquely brilliant work, *On Floating Bodies*, he shifts it all into an incomprehensible deductive mode. My own presentation of Archimedes insight requires a sense of humour and a twist of artistry in the use of a coat hanger, two bananas and a glass of water. Perhaps we may get round to that one of these days?²

Certainly it would be unconventional, and also frowned upon: I know, for I have done my banana experiment under formal academic circumstances that would have required solemn discourse on axioms of hydrostatics. At all events, here I seem somewhat safer in turning rather to a program which at the moment can be seen on Canadian Television: "So You Think You Can Dance: Canada?"

"So you think you can dance?" A pause over this question, so remote from academic discourse, can give us creative leads on the problem of thinking about thinking and rethinking and of leaping to shifts in our views on thinking.

First, there is the explicit reference to thinking: "do you think?" the **think** mentioned here is a spontaneous **think**. The competitors and the adjudicators need no elaborate theory of thinking but merely the presupposition of a common practice of thinking, in the sense that we all know what we mean by a question and by the word *think*. But suppose we give the question and the word a Socratic push: where would that lead us? Like the courageous Greeks faced with Socrates' interest in the meaning of *courage*, we might resent the suggestion that we do not know what thinking is. Or we might fall back, or forward, into someone else's words regarding thinking. So, one might claim that thinking is a matter of going from premises to conclusions, and here I can helpfully recall a mean strategy of mine that I used in a first lecture of a standard course on reasoning. I solemnly began with that so-called definition: reasoning as

²A fairly full consideration of Archimedes' presentation of his solution is available in *Cantower 27*, "Atoms in Motion", on my Website www.philipmcs Shane.ca .

moving from premises to conclusions. I illustrated the view abundantly with old chestnuts like “All men are mortal, Socrates is a man ... ” etc. We laboured on for the hour, the class taking notes from my solemn discourse and clear writing. In the concluding three minutes I paused and remarked that the whole lecture and its direction was quite misleading: that we would begin freshly in the following class. Yet I might ask how many students have been thus trapped in a view of thinking that just does not jive with the reality in us? What do you think?

The implicit occurrence of **think** in the final word of the question, “do you think you can **dance?**”, can nudge us out of the trap, for do we not assume that dance in such competitions requires thinking? Moreover, the thinking involved is amazingly layered and subtle. So, a pause here can allow us to think of the thinking within the dance: wonder and desire sweetly yet strenuously operative in the molecules of mind and blood, muscle and nerve. And behind, within, that sweet and strenuous operating there is the prior achievement of stretched imagination, stretched by wonder’s creativity in a way that has little to do with logic and much to do with biological and chemical patterns that offer the concrete unity of some minutes of concrete performance. And I would have us recall the details of such programs as I am thinking of, with their subtle praise and blame, their tears of joy and frustration. The whole business is not only concrete but a full-bodied reach for integrality, authenticity. And we would come to see, if we paused long enough through these Autumn days, that such full-bodied reaching grounds a paradigm for science that is consistently missing in our laboratories and lectures. But let us, for the moment, stay with the dance. It is useful for each of us to have some definite dance in mind. The program that I mentioned is a source of illustrations and images, but one may reach out to memories of Nijinski or Martha Graham or Twyla Tharpe or Merce Cunningham, or contemporary films like this year’s British Film, *Street Dancing*.

The core of creating dance and the living through of such a dance is a wondrous stretching of imagination that leads to a stretching of nerves, muscles, toes, in the

concrete reality of gravity, wood and melody. But what is imagination? That, certainly, is a question for another day, though perhaps in later discussion we may touch on its complex neuromolecular reality. For the moment, with a vague meaning for the word and the reality, let us muse about the flexed imagination as the core of all aesthetic reaching. And let us pause over that aesthetic reaching in a zone that is a cousin of dance but somehow closer to the everyday, the zone of acting, of stage or screen performance. I think immediately of one of Constantin Stanislavski's sayings: "Every movement you make on stage, every word you speak, is a result of the right life of your imagination."³ " He goes on there to assert, "If you speak any lines, or do anything, mechanically, without fully realizing who you are, where you came from, why, what you want, where you are going, and what you will do when you get there, you will be acting without imagination."⁴ And how does Stanislavski deal with a lack of imagination? He writes briefly and to the point elsewhere: "we sometimes have to deal with sluggish imaginations, which will not respond to even the simplest question. Then I have only one course open, I not only propound the question, I also suggest the answer. If the student can use that answer he goes on from there. If not, he changes it, and puts something else in its place. In either case he has been obliged to use his own inner vision. In the end something of an illusory existence is created."⁵

It is not true that here, in this talk, I have, parallel to Stanislavski, only one course open to me. Indeed, we have all too many ways that we might take in reflecting on the aesthetic and on its role in lifting science, the performance of science, to its proper dance of meaning. But I find it cunning to follow Stanislavski's simple strategy: to "suggest an answer. If the student can use that answer he goes on from there."

³Constantin Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, translated by Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood, Routledge, New York, 1964, 71. To be referred to below as **Stanislavski**.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵**Stanislavski**, 67.

So I switch to the question, “so you think you can date?”, a question whose simplicity disguises its power to deal with meetings of all types, meeting a novel, meeting a menu, meeting a friend that is surely an object of concern, and indeed meeting the object of any science, such as the sunflower in botany. The latter meeting was for me the source of great revelations about science, intimated in the title which I gave a consequent essay, “Sunflower, Speak to Us of Growing.”⁶ The question of dating had its origin for me in twenty years of teaching in Mt. St. Vincent University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where the majority of my students were young ladies who might well have asked the question discomfortingly of many of their dating companions. “So you think you can date?”

The topic was conveniently a topic of a Friday class, and sometimes I found myself going home on the bus later with that bus bulging with the radiance of perfumes and expectations, smiles and bright eyes. But what awaited the young ladies down town? That would be the topic of the Monday class. Had they met on Friday the person that I called *Cosmo Polaris*: a name that echoed Bernard Lonergan’s reach for a Cosmopolis of richer meaning?⁷ Did they meet someone who was sensitively attentive, understanding, truthful, adventurous, committed? I have named there five orientations of any two that are dating. The issue of the course was to begin, oh so slowly, to appreciate those five orientations in oneself, but what was magnificently revealing of those orientation was the concrete absence of their operations in a partner for the evening. Sensitive appreciative? Sometimes Cosmo showed no more reaction to a delicate perfume than he would to machine oil. Understanding of the young lady? There was the rare occasion when Cosmo’s opening remark, “how are you?” was a genuine reach for words of joy or pain to be digested, for illumination. Truth? Facts

⁶This is the title of *Cantower 2*, a ten-volume series of essays, titled *Cantowers*, on the Website.

⁷See his *Insight*, chapter 7, section 8.

could well be clouded by the bravado of beer. And what of adventure? To the lady's question, "What are we doing tonight?" the answer, with horrid frequency, would be "the usual". The same old same mold was too often the fate of the dying evening.

And what of commitment? There is the stale old joke that captures a possibility which has some probability: Sez he, "Will you sleep with me tonight?" Sez she, "Will you respect me in the morning?" Sez he, "I don't respect you now". Rarely, perhaps, the twilight meeting reaches the resonance of Wordsworth's lines: "She was phantom of delight / When first she gleamed upon my sight / A lovely apparition sent / to be a moment's ornament." But then, what meetings of our cancered culture reach in serious manner towards that high achievement of the invariant human orientations to be attentive, intelligent, reasonable, adventurous, responsible?

Indeed, are we meeting now in that strange way of adventurous beauty, made doubly deeply strange by the presence of nudges towards a reduplication that makes adventurous beauty the focus of our adventure here, made doubly beautiful here as a potential bastion and basket of dissent? The word *basket*, no doubt, rings odd here. I am thinking, in my use of the word, both of James Joyce's searchings for the meaning of art that are woven round a simple basket, and of foolish methods of economics that center attention either on a non-existent standard basket of goods or on a disorienting basket of stocks or supermonies. We return later to these different types of baskets.

But, here and now, might we, like a dance audience, sense a lift in nerve and bone towards the seriousness of the hints of the quote from the film *Wit* or from that Korean poem? "Now is not the time for verbal thought-play. Nothing would be worse than a detailed scholarly analysis of erudition, interpretation, complication. Now is the time for simplicity. Now is the time for, dare I say it, kindness." And the kindness at present would be a silent acknowledgment of an inner ache of loneliness pulsing privately through each of us, glimpsing the possibility of an exception to Henry Giroux's claim: "it appears that very little is being said about the ideas, social relations, and values that are at work in higher education to produce what might be called the

liberal subject.”⁸ Yet might that silent acknowledgment not ferment into more than a little being said in these few days about what is at work in higher education, and what is missing, excluded, murdered? The question has been taken out of each question mark sitting here tonight: might heart and art twitch towards dissent? I recall Bernard Lonergan’s dancing voice of fifty years ago pitching high the challenge to twitch towards a new dance of meaning. “What I want to communicate in this talk about art is the notion that art is relevant to concrete living, that it is an exploration of the potentialities of concrete living. That exploration is extremely important in our age, when philosophers for at least two centuries, through doctrines in politics, economics, education, and through ever further doctrines, have been trying to remake man, and have done not a little to make human life unlivable.”⁹ He was talking of art, and he had reached the concluding paragraph. His appeal, in the final words, was for a liberation of consciousness, yet there was a way in which his audience could comfortably think of that liberation as someone else’s problem. But here and now my appeal is to the battered question-marks sitting in the hall. The actors reading Stanislavski’s instructions are not reading so as to write a book or criticize a culture: they are reading towards acting. The young ladies of Mt.St.Vincent University were not interested in doing a philosophy course: they were interested in breaking forward from stale patterns of dating and mating.

What of Stephens talk of the basket and of art to Lynch in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*? Was it a Stanislavski moment of education, an invitation to break forward, a Lonergan call for a step beyond nominalist truncation?

⁸From the summary of Henry Giroux’s paper.

⁹Bernard Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, University of Toronto Press, 1993, 232.

Stephen translates from Aquinas:

“Three things are needed for beauty: wholeness, harmony and radiance.¹⁰ Do these correspond to the phases of apprehension? Are you following?

- Of course I am, said Lynch. If you think I have an excrementitious intelligence run after Donovan and ask him to listen to you.

Stephen pointed at a basket which a butcher’s boy had slung inverted on his head.

- Look at that basket, he said.

- I see it, said Lynch.

- In order to see that basket, said Stephen, your mind first of all separates the basket from the rest of the visible universe which is not the basket. The first phases of apprehension is a bounding line drawn about the object to be apprehended. you apprehend it as one thing. You see it as one whole. You apprehend the wholeness. That is *integritas*.

- Bull’s eye! Said Lynch, laughing. Go on.”¹¹

What a sad line this that follows the word *integritas*, wholeness. Lynch laughs his bulls-eye miss and calls for a continuance. Lonergan’s audience breaks for coffee and returns for a like continuance. Stanislavski hopes that his advice on stale imagination will survive in some twisted form. Are we not back at the message of that first quotation? “Now is not the time for verbal thought-play. Nothing would be worse than a detailed scholarly analysis of erudition, interpretation, complication. Now is the time for simplicity. Now is the time for, dare I say it, kindness.” And the fundamental kindness is to glimpse effectively, in lonely solitude, that verbal thought-play is eating

¹⁰One might follow up the possible connect to Lonergan’s threefold description, in chapter 8 of *Insight*, of a thing as a unity identity whole. One may consider that Lonergan’s three correspond to Aquinas’ first two: *claritas* can then be considered to add the refinement of beauty.

¹¹Editions and paginations vary, so best give the general reference as about 50 pages from the end of the book.

our lives, and that the climb out of it is a long private road that, yes, can merge with other self-searchings to generate a trickling stream of cultural protest.

Joyce's Stephen puts it so neatly, a swift pointing to the pinnacle "You see it as one whole. You apprehend the wholeness. That is *integritas*." But when do you thus see it? Certainly not with the swiftness of Lynch, a member of the Lynch-mob of verbal erudition. Joyce was to go on in his life to sniff out the flaws of talking and telling in the old language, and indeed eventually to put the basket back into the universe, so that "riverrun past Eve and Adam" and the basket is weaved into the whole of history and telling becomes a tale of each and all humbly circling round all. The circular telling becomes a matter of characters 'reading the book of themselves' on the riverride to the sea. But Joyce did not get to a luminous telling, nor did the "detailed scholarly analysis of erudition, interpretation, complication" of the century since. The characters failed to read the book of themselves or the place of their dates in history.

New characters are needed, meeting Aristotle's odd hope of the first paragraph of his *Magna Moralia*: "Since our purpose is to speak about matters of character, we must first inquire of what character is a branch. To speak concisely, then, it would seem to be a branch of nothing else than statecraft."¹² How close are we in history to aid the genesis of such characters? By what miracle of method and persuasion might we lift the probabilities of such characters from a Poisson distribution to the hope of a Bell Curve in the next thousand years?

Like Stanislavski, I have risked giving my answer, and so risk my answer to be twisted in as many ways as there are people here. The answer may be enlarged on considerably, as any serious human answer can. If the answer has the heuristic depth of a new and fresh science, then it has hundreds of years of enlargement quite beyond present fantasy. What begins, then, as a simple exercise for young ladies in discerning dates can and will bubble forward as a new human era, a shift from the spontaneity of

¹²The beginning of "Magna Moralia" in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2, edited by Jonathan Barnes, Princeton University Press, 1984, p.1864.

whatting to a luminous self-possession of that whatting by the whatter, whatever the whatter is doing.¹³ It is to meet Stanislavski's demands, not just on the stage but in the street, in the science, in the song, in the symphony. "Fully realizing who you are, where you came from, why, what you want."¹⁴

Stanislavski's demands are, in an obvious way, brutal and immediate: the two words *fully realize* cut into every successful or unsuccessful stage-entry. I once watched an entry by Peter O'Toole, watching his little finger twitching behind his clasped-hands back: the little finger was, so to speak, luminously not his. Might Stanislavski's demands tone up a whole culture, the whole world on a new stage, in a new stage of meaning?¹⁵

Three odd Greeks, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, lifted forward by Greek Drama, gave us a nudge with such expressions as *know thyself* or Aristotle's inadequate suggestion at the beginning of his *Metaphysics*: "All men by nature desire to know."¹⁶ The expression is inadequate, whether in Aristotle's Greek or its present various

¹³I express an optimism here regarding Lonergan's vision of two historical phases of "the living of the temporal subject", where I take his reflections in a phyletic sense rather than an ontic sense. "It is clear that there are two phases of a temporal subject: the first is a prior phases when by one's natural spontaneity one is the subject of one's actuated intellectual nature; the second is a subsequent phases, when, as knowing and willing, one is by one's own intention the subject of one's intellectual nature both as actuated and as to be actuated further." (Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, University of Toronto Press, 2007, 405. Then the historical issue is the slow transition from spontaneous operations to luminous operations. That, I think, is the fundamental issue with which we are at present dealing. See further note 15 below.

¹⁴Stanislavski, 71.

¹⁵One may follow up the suggestion of note 13 above. Then we moves to a fresh grip on the transition from latent to explicit metaphysics: there is to be identifiable a historical period of problematic metaphysics. (See *Insight*, chapter 14, sections 2 and 3). One can go further to identify the second of the three stages of meaning (see *Method in Theology*, chapter 3, section 10) with that problematic stage, a long period of human of messing with meaning in which common sense battle with history's dynamic against the emergence of a science of man. The battle, of course, involves the messy impoverished meanings of science that this paper, and its companion, skim past.

¹⁶*Op. cit.* note 12 above, p. 1553.

translations. It is close to the erudition that is condemned by the dying woman in *Wit*. It is brought close to re-translation by the dating women of my class: not “all men” but this man here, my date, Cosmo Polis or Tom or Dick or Harry, does he desire to know? And what is that in me that longs that he do so?

Yes, indeed, have we not reached a key-note, a key word? *What* is that I me that longs that he do so: full stop. The question-mark is or can be thus lifted from the statement. **WHAT** is that in me that longs that he does so.

And perhaps, in arriving here, I should cut short my presentation so as to witness your presentations of rescued question-marks. We would be cancelling out a word from the Korean Poem quoted at the beginning: not, then, “someone is taking out a question from a question mark” but, cutting away the *out* and reaching something like the meeting that is the core of genuine artistry. “Someone is taking a question from a question mark” The taking becomes a luminous cherishing, the question mark of noise like a shot fired in the human race: on your marks, set, and going on: **What**, in very deed, would be going on.

You may well be thinking now- that warped word, *thinking*, again - that I am in fantasy land. And indeed you are right. As Joyce suspected through his two last books, we desperately need a new language that would hold us close to the molecules of our desires. What is needed and not at all yet identifiable is a new human expressiveness, a strange mix of linguistic and non-linguistic feedback¹⁷ that would make presence

¹⁷The linguistic feedback that I am envisaging, one that reaches luminously to make language a Home Of Wonder [or of WHAT], a HOW-Language is a remote human goal, pivoting on aesthetic integrity. Lonergan introduces the notion in *Method in Theology*, in note 34 of page 88. There is a second mention of linguistic feedback in the typescript of the book, lost in the shift to publication. So, line 12ff of page 93 should read: “in the measure that linguistic **feedback is achieved, that is in the measure that** explanations and statements provide the sensible presentations for the insights that effect further developments of thought and language.” The bold-faced section is missing from the published version. Note that the conversations in Australia that I describe include non-linguistic devises, types of which are included in my presentation at this conference.

luminous, as it is on these rare occasions when a statue or a symphony leaps into one's integrity, to give a point of intersection between the timeless and time, a moment in T.S.Eliot's rose garden. It is to give wonder a home through a HOW-language, linguistic or not. It is what, the WHAT, that we must needs seek in this next century of the humanities. A language that is a HOW-language, a "Home Of Wonder" language, in which What can vibrate in Joyce's three phases of "wholeness, harmony, radiance."¹⁸ Might we thus shift along a strange trail towards Wordsworth's dream, so that the world and every ordinary thing should take on the enchantment of a dream?

But that strange trail demands details of daily climbing that must be discovered in a new collaboration of what in Oxford they call town and gown. Yet the change demands a massive lift and leap for town and gown there. For four weeks this past summer I wandered round that gown-town of Oxford puzzling about the distant genesis of the lift and the leap so desperately needed there.¹⁹

I have moved us back to the general problematic context, the cumulative cancer that oppresses both artistic deeds and the daily lonelinesses. One might end there, but that would be a mistake, one perhaps opening the door to what the *Wit* speech calls "detailed scholarly analysis of erudition, interpretation, complication." It seems to me best to end on our keynote, our key word, **What**, and to do so in a recollection of the context in which the theatrics of my presentation first emerged.

A few years ago I was invited to spend 5 weeks in a Jesuit school in Sydney Australia - suitably called St. Ignatius College - to boost their views and practices of education and spirituality. While there, I offered to give classes in whatever zones teachers wished to use me. I had never taught at school level before, so it was quite a new experience. Nor indeed, had I lived on a school campus, and that too was novel

¹⁸Joyce's *Portrait of an Artist*, the speech to Lynch, translating Thomas on art.

¹⁹A large historical question emerges here, starting with Scotus' Oxford. A helpful start is note 126, page 39, of Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, University of Toronto Press, 1997.

and enlightening. In the early mornings, after 6.00 a.m., I would walk to the staff office area through the games areas. The boys were already out there, practicing tennis and soccer and Ozzie football. The practice was serious, perhaps at times edging towards Stanislavski's standards. I grew to see - Do you see those boys, Lynch? - to see the drive towards integrity of performance, and the lurking lonelinesses of unsuccessful presences.

The morning vision carried into my first venture into a classroom, a group of grade 11 boys studying world religions. I had seen earlier the basket of boys, young **whats** reaching out integrally in the morning light and, even before the teacher introduced me, I wrote on the blackboard the statement, "What is a schoolboy". As I paused at the beginning of my unpredictable venture into school-level teaching, one bright-eyed boy raised his hand. "Sir, he said, have you forgotten the question-mark?" And so our adventure together began. "What is a schoolboy": a too-easily forgotten fact, a radiance cancered out by a culture of false memory. I was quietly recalling Collingwood's wonderful cynicism about his school days: they encouraged the students in games so that they might use up the energy that they were not called to use in the classrooms. So I switched the question slowly to a particular zone of their game-interests by writing on the board "What is a goal-keeper". We particularized too and fro till we were, as it were, there in imagination at the poise before the penalty shot. Indeed, there I was, leaning forward as if in a soccer goal, in a Stanislavski poise. And some of the footballer addicts in the class leaned towards an imaginary ball with alert toes.

There is that wondrous moment when striker and goalkeeper are integral whats, and again you may think of what Stanislavski said:

"If you speak any lines, or do anything, mechanically, without fully realizing who you are, where you came from, why, what you want, where you are going, and what you will do when you get there, you will be acting without imagination."²⁰ The

²⁰*Ibid.*

imaginations of striker and goalkeeper reach to proximate possibilities, but only in the work of art, like the plays of Ibsen or Becket, does imagination blossom in a detailed destiny of achievement. I have seen Beckham launch a penalty shot into the safe sky, and no doubt you have all seen a goalkeeper go helplessly in the wrong direction. But nonetheless, the poise is there, the goal keeper is What from head to toe, and the save can be a work of art. Since the class was in world religions I recalled the Hindu tradition in which Krishna, in the Bhagavadgita, answers Arjuna's question, "What is man?" with various pointers, and I suggested that they pause over the possibility that Krishna would have given better orientation to Arjuna and history by simply saying "Yes. What is man."

Soccer, of course, may not be your interest, but then you must find a zone where the word *poise* resonates with your own imagination and molecules. Think of a heroine and a hero of the twentieth century that I like to mention: Navratilova poised to return serve; Nijinski poised for his leap out the window in *The Spectre of the Rose*. I recall a Wimbledon interview with the elder Navratilova where she spoke about such returns and claimed that now she was a much better tennis player, but she just could not make the moves. The integral artist in her had reached new flexings of "wholeness, harmony, radiance."²¹ And I recall Marie Rambert, who worked with Nijinski at the Ballet Russes, reporting on Nijinski's wondrous leap 60 years later, at the age of 84: "I do not know how far about the ground he was, but he was near the stars". Are our schoolboys and schoolgirls asked to thus flex and fly in imagination?

But back to my classroom experiences in Oz. The next class to which I was invited was a geography class. What in earth was I to say to this group, in a room full of wall-maps of the world's nations? The issue became one of detecting the missing map. It became more particular and local when I talked of the maps at the two main gates to the college.

²¹Joyce's *Portrait of an Artist*, the speech to Lynch, translating Thomas on art.

The map that was missing was, of course, the map that concerned the young ladies of Mt.St.Vincent University, a map that helped them to name and recognize the dynamics of the loneliness of their dressed-up **what** in a date, and the sluggishness of that dynamic in their companion. So, our geography class turned out to be a matter of “reading the book of themselves”, recalling with that phrase Joyce’s borrowing from Mallarme, “lisant au livre de lui-meme.”²² That “reading of themselves” turned out to be the direction of a later combined class, with teachers occupying the back seats of the class. I mischievously reversed the dating problem discussion with the ladies in that now I had the potential Cosmo Polis, Tom, Dick and Harry sitting there, slightly embarrassed about the home truths of their awkward dating efforts, including beering up to dutch their courage. As I talked, they glanced furtively at their teachers, who were, I hoped, doing a little self-reading.

Then there was a grade 8 class to younger boys dealing with the topic *Reading the Bible*. All the previous stuff turned up of course: have I a map for reading Eve and Adam or, more shockingly for them, the mind of Jesus mentioned explicitly as a topic in *Philippians* chapter 1 verse 5 and in *Second Corinthians* chapter 2 verse 16. Our topic was reading, and the key to success came when their previous music class was mentioned. I switched from Bible to Bruckner, and invited them to read what I then wrote of the board: both the stave version and the tonic solfa version of Bruckner’s famous five notes of his Eighth Symphony. Dare I venture them now? Doh - , me, fah, soh, soh [below]! The notes emerge early in that wondrous 100 minutes of music and dominate its evolution. This weaved basket of Bruckner’s goods, written when Joyce was three, would have been a far better challenge for Lynch than the butcher boy’s basket. At all events the young boys took to the challenge and got a glimpse of the reality of serious reading. What is it to read those five notes, to reach for Bruckner’s sense of them? Is it not a climb of years? And what, then, of the dynamic 5 levels, 5 notes, of the dating

²²*Ulysses*, chapter 9. Apologies for the missing French accents.

process?

But enough for the moment. To conclude regarding the class given to 13 year-olds, for me, the high point of that class, and indeed of all my classes in the school, was when one small boy raised his hand to make the point: “sir, you are trying to get us to notice what we do when we read, aren’t you?”

I come to a final illustration from those classroom ventures, one that brings us right back to the Henry Giroux’s project of dealing with Neoliberalism. Neoliberalism can be summarily described as a marriage of neo-classical economics with the sociology of a market-driven economy. Giroux would have dealt with it in a powerful analytic and historical sweep. Here I illustrate a short-cut from my challenge to talk to a grade 12 class in economics. In this case I was better prepared. I had studied their grade 12 text.²³ And I had invented a way for teachers to handle its ignorance and obscenity so that students could still pass the state exam, knowing that the text was deeply erroneous and immoral in its approach. It was a matter, briefly, of giving a few sane classes in the beginning of the required course and then going on through the game-plan of the text with a twinkle in the eye. The class I gave was powerfully illuminating for me. The 18-year-olds got the point by thinking out with me the right diagram of economic exchange, exposing the folly of the standard text not only for grade 12 but for undergraduates the world over. The illumination has lead me to change my treatment of, and dealings with, establishment economics so as to avoid worthless controversy and to make more publically manifest the deep simple errors at its roots, its basis. But that is a topic for another day.²⁴

²³*Prehumous* 1, “Teaching Highschool Economics. A Common-Quest Manifesto,” on my Website, considers the problem presented by grade 12 texts in various countries and in particular the Australian text used in St. Ignatius College. The strategy of handling such texts without rocking the school boat is discussed in detail there.

²⁴The illumination has led me to discourage discussion of “heavy topics” with Establishment economists. The error is a simple one, manifest from a serious concrete integral attention to the fact that there are at least two types of firms in an economy. That distinction,

The significance of this class, and the others I mentioned, is that they reveal a set of strategies that may be of consequence in our task of lifting the humanities towards being, to quote Henry Giroux, a “site of resistance to the ongoing reproduction of a market-driven society.”²⁵ One needs strategies that do not debate the large issues - for the Establishment does not listen - but that expose loudly its gross errors.²⁶

In my final days at that college in Sydney I told various groups that my plan was to go out on the night of my departure and paint on the outside wall of the College the slogan, “What is going on in St. Ignatius College”. The head-master in the final assembly on the last day remarked that he had put security on alert for the coming night. Might I, or some other wit in the tradition of the film *Wit*, meeting the need for kindness, risk painting in some public place on this Campus, “What is going on in St. Thomas University”.

What, Whats, What, say you?

clearly and operatively made, reveals the grounds for monetary oscillations, especially when creativity and innovation are involved. Missing that as an analytic key at the early stages of analysis turns the whole economic pseudo-science into an alchemy. See (a) McShane, *Sane Economics and Fusionism*, Axial Publishing, 2010 (info@axialpublishing.com); (b) *Divyadaan*, vol. 21, no. 2 (August, 2010), seven articles dealing with the question, “Do You Want a Sane Global Economy?”

²⁵I am quoting the summary of his lecture at the conference.

²⁶There is no harm in concluding the footnotes here with a pointer to a further elementary exposing of an Establishment gone horribly wrong. It is an exercise I gave to my students regularly. Go to the library or, better, to the book-store of the university, and check the indices of books on children, education, etc etc, under the word *Question*. Regularly there is nothing under **Q**, except perhaps Questionnaire or Quine. So much for the child as WHAT.