

Fusion 6

The Emergent Beauty of Economic Collaboration

“When you have command and control by the top 10 people, you can only do one or two things at a time. The future is about collaboration and teamwork, and making decisions with a replicable process that offers scale, speed and flexibility.”¹

It is forty years since I began with a quotation from a musicology journal and ventured to make a case for the value of functional specialization in musicology. Am I beginning the same venture here for Business Studies? Most definitely, No.² I have written my Swansong³ and my Soupsong,⁴ and now leave such an effort to other generations. But would such an effort be worthwhile?

I wrote that essay in musicology in some innocence. Certainly as a dialectic-foundational effort, however undifferentiated, it was valid. But there was no structure of collaboration to get it into the music journals, much less into The Royal Irish Academy of Music. What was missing, and still is, is a structure of functional “collaboration and teamwork with a replicable process that offers scale, speed and flexibility”. When that is no longer missing, when functional collaboration is a reality of the next century, then there will be a replicable process, a cyclic criticism, that will have foundational shifts hit the streets with “speed and flexibility”, that will ground the further emergence of the unity and beauty and efficiency of economic collaboration, and that on a global scale.

¹John Chambers, CEO of CISCO, quoted in *Business Week*, March 23 and 30, 2009, page 033.

²I was reluctant to say *no* to the possibility of entering into the complexities of business and rhetoric over the ages, and such details as the manner in which the automobile twines into patterns of progress and decline. But these issue will emerge through the strategies of the pursuit of Functional Marketing.

³Fusion 1, “Economic Reformation”

⁴Fusion 5, “What Collaboration Might be Achieved in 2010-2015?”

My strategy in this short essay - and it very deliberately short - is to suggest moves that would be effective in carrying us towards the seeds of such emergent beauty. **Us?** I am thinking very definitely of the **us** of the Seton Hall conference. A dozen of us, with I hope allies in the audience. In most of the papers we presented there emerged the question, What can be done?

This is simply a preliminary follow-up on that question from me, someone who had read most of the papers by early April, 2009.

Lonergan asked me in 1968 to find an economist. We were both pretty naive in the matter. Lonergan spent his last years puttering around the possibility of a primer, and I have done my share of ineffective puttering. Might we do better? We should surely try.⁵ We can no longer afford the idiocy of just packing our bags and publishing our papers. It would be grossly irresponsible of us, deeply immature.⁶ Is not that a shocking claim? Yet its grounds are the new seeds of an ethos of *Praxis* that calls us to the “intelligently controlled performance of the tasks set by world order.”⁷ Were functional collaboration a reality, then, yes, we could pass the baton to the next specialty, so that our collective wisdom would, “with speed and flexibility” hit the spot.

What can we do? I would have us, for starters, brood over the following statement from the first page of the chapter on *Communications* in *Method*. “Without the first seven stages, of course, there is no fruit to be borne. But without the last the first seven are in vain, for they fail to mature.” Well, we don’t have the first seven, nor the last. What we have to do, it seems to me, is invent a shabby version of the last: those of us who have the time and the energy. Count me in: how about you?

You? I reach beyond the dozen or so speakers to the audience, some of whom

⁵Why this normative remark? It leaps deep into the problem and purpose of finite knowing, into its mysterious exigence and eschatology. See note 13 below for one elementary perspective which opens up questions regarding “the notion of being”.

⁶A fresh reading, no doubt, of “they fail to mature” (*Method in Theology*, 355.)

⁷*Insight*, 724[745].

suspect, believe, that we, through Lonergan, have hit on a “new order,”⁸ “a readaptation of the whole existing structure,”⁹ “a new beginning.”¹⁰ But what I emphasize, what I would wish you to intussuscept, is that I am looking for people open to a new bent, a bent, if you like, to PR.¹¹ “Communications is concerned with theology in its external relations.”¹² I am looking for a new order, a readaptation of the whole existing structure, and I fantasize about it in terms of an emergent group of 22,220 people,¹³ which would include “command and control by the top 10 people”, ten who are seriously foundational, incarnating the general and special categories in a way that is generative both of further refinements of them and of their refined circulation. We do not have such top people. But we have our shabby selves, and those among our friends and acquaintances that we can bring to partly understand, partly believe. My fantasy reaches out to 10,000 villages with “the practical economist as familiar a professional figure as the doctor, the lawyer, or the engineer.”¹⁴

⁸Lonergan, *For A New Political Economy*, 6. Referred to below as **FNPE**.

⁹*Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 7.

¹¹This is an openness that calls one into a psychic struggle, as I find in myself now. At 77, how can I possibly switch psychologically into marketing?! But at least I am out of the threatened world of thesis, publications, tenure: most of my readers, I suspect, are trapped there and have to follow Lonergan’s advice to me in 1968 about the “union card”, “give the guy what he wants”. So you may have to keep you”bent” hidden behind a smile.

¹²*Method in Theology*, 132.

¹³The odd number comes from my imaginative structure, based on the image of 10,000 villages. So: 10,000 people, one in each village, with focus on research, 1000 globally-distributed grappling with interpretations, 100 in the zone of history, and 10 dialecticians. That gives half the team. The other half’s identity is evident.

¹⁴**FNPE**, 37.

First, then, there is “the problem of identification,”¹⁵ and I am not going to enter here into that complex problem of “The Appropriation of Truth.”¹⁶ We are certainly a shabby lot as practical economists, and the shabbiness extends to our self-identification. I recall now, seven years ago, beginning the *Cantowers* on Easter Monday. April 1st, 2002, pointing to the shabby lot who took on the British Empire on Easter Monday 1916.¹⁷

How might a self-identified group of us take on the Economic Establishment? Like the revolutionaries in Dublin, strategic sites should be occupied. However, the important element is the self-identification, and it is also the most evident zone of difficulty for us. Apart from myself, we are occupied elsewhere. That difficulty already gives a nudge towards noticing the difficulty of specialization in an adverse culture. My fantasy asks for 10,000 villagers that are researchers and 10,000 villagers in the specialty of communications. Could we manage 10 communicators, or more than 3 marketeers, in the Gomorrah of tomorrow? Whatever few we can manage would need to be willing and able to coordinate the suggestions of fringe members, “associate members”. We all, perhaps, have some initial suggestions - certainly I have and have expressed them¹⁸ - but what is normative for the seeding of the functional specialty communications is some explicit identification.

At this stage in my reflections I halted to brood, with the assistance of Russell Baker, on a way to reach such an explicit identification, and eventually came up with

¹⁵*Insight* 558[582]. The problem of identification is much deeper than one might suspect: but best leave that for another day.

¹⁶*Insight* 558[581].

¹⁷See *Cantower 1*, “Function and History”, April 1st 2002.

¹⁸Broadly, in chapters 5 and 6 of *Pastkeynes Pastmodern Economics: A Fresh Pragmatism*. More particularly in *Prehumous 1*, “Teaching Highschool Economics. A Common-Quest Manifesto,” in *Field Nocturnes CanTower 46*, “An Effective Strategy of Economic Reform” and in the recent Fusion essays.

the single page that is given in Fusion 7, titled “Functional Marketing”. For convenience I reproduce it here as an Appendix. The membership mentioned there requires a definite psychological shift to what Lonergan talked of as **Praxis**: a bent towards effectiveness, a bent whose theoretic - or pragmatics - relates to the unity and beauty of any science.¹⁹

The activities of the members are expected to have effects, as it were, in two directions. There should be some definite achievements in moving people of influence - such as teachers and politicians - towards new views and new interventions in public life. But there are also the effects within the full practice of methodology that are to spontaneously emerge. So, for example, the effort to reach various groups reveals to the members the need for, and the absence of, back-up that is eventually to come from the development of other specialties: think of the need for a better genetic systematics of economic theory, or of the need for contrafactual history of twentieth century third-world developments. But I do not wish to get into these complications here. I focus, as you notice, on the weak spot of Lonergan studies, so that what is obvious is that the work of promoting Lonergan - or just his economics - clearly requires two specialties or foci: a group thinking out the economics “in various ways”, and a group marketing the “sequence of operative insights.”²⁰

¹⁹My now familiar reference here is to *Topics in Education* 160, line 16, where Lonergan writes of the unity of a science that comes from efficiency.

²⁰*Insight* 227[252]. The concluding reference brings us back uncomfortably to the context of decay that is ours, spelled out by Lonergan in that section 8 of *Insight*'s chapter 7.

APPENDIX

Functional Marketing

A New Group has being formed whose identity is a seeding of the eighth functional specialty. “Functional Marketing” is an relatively obvious variant on “Communications as Functional Specialty,” but more publically accessible. The group has both members and associates. The group was formed primarily in relation to **[A] the marketing of Lonergan’s economics**, but has a larger interest in (and this also relates to present problems in economics) **[B] the promotion of functional collaboration in any discipline.**

Associates are those interested in maintaining contact with the project without necessarily any active involvement beyond casual promotion of it. Members are committed to pursue both the promotion of [A] and [B] in manners determined by ongoing group e-mail discussion,²¹ and publications within the specialty.

For better public identification the group is named *Howfield Marketing*. “How field?” has the usual games-meaning, but the word also relates to two suggestions of Lonergan regarding [I] **the field** as the goal of the human enterprise;²² [ii] linguistic feedback: *HOW* future language is to express - field - subjectivity.²³ This second meaning draws attention, for the group and others, to the full scientific status of the eighth specialty and the control-demands in its language.

²¹Already there are initiated determined efforts to edge into the teaching of both grad 12 and first year university courses some interest in Lonergan’s “Two-Circuit” analysis, to promote more widely his theoretic of both credit and profit, and to reach government circles.

²²“The field is the universe, but my horizon defines my universe”(Phenomenology and Logic, 199).

²³“The possibility of insight is achieved by linguistic feed-back, by expressing the subjective experience in words and as subjective”(Method in Theology, 88, note 34). There is a second occurrence of the phrase, boldfaced here, missed in printing, on line 12 of page 92: “linguistic **feed-back is achieved, that is in the measure that** explanations”

For further information contact Russell Baker (coordinator)²⁴ at rsslbkr@citenet.net
or Philip McShane (secretary) at pmcshane@shaw.ca

²⁴Russell Baker's Website, libertybelle.ca , contains a section on **Howfield Marketing**.
The website www.philipmcshane.ca duplicates this section.