

Humus 6 Repatterning The Superegos' Molecular Religiosity

So I arrive here at the title for the first of three sessions of the Halifax 2008 gathering. And the titles for the other two sessions echo the titles of *Humus 7* and *Humus 8*. The objective of the meeting is to stir ourselves, and indeed those seriously interested in Lonergan's pointings, towards functional collaboration. The elementary strategy is to be the cultivation of functional talk. That is something we can all share as a starting zone, whether we have been reading Lonergan and self-digesting for fifty years or five months.

No gathering of people interested in Lonergan is uniform, and the 2008 Halifax conference is no exception. But we have here the possibility of a uniform beginning, shared with humour, humously, earthily yet eerily. That possibility relates to two uniformities: first, we are all beginners in this talking enterprise; secondly, the crippling neuromolecularity is more-or-less uniform in educated western cultures. Now I am not going into that second uniformity any further than the hints of *Humus 2*, where we tip-toed round the massive issue of a locked "*Vis Cogitative: Contemporary Defective Patterns of Anticipation*". We just try to get on with the job in the manner in which children can be slowly brought out of defective patterns of behaviour. Is this somewhat Skinnerian? Well, we shall see.

Our advantage over Skinner and company is the Childout - Chilled-out, Chill-doubt - Principle.¹ I do not venture into that topic either. Sufficient here to note that it builds the search for self-luminosity into the process of searching, indeed at any age. There is a spontaneity of language behaviour which orients us molecularly, sight seen within an interpretative scene, towards the de-lonely-ing appearance of sharing. When teaching small children, we know that this appearance is saved e.g. by size. So, teachers talk down, in the best sense, to these little people. If the little people, in the relevant area of talk, are disguised as big people, as was the case when Lonergan spoke about modern logic to his clerical audience in 1957, then the speaker may save the appearances by sketchings and etchings. By etchings I mean the efficient persuasive

¹Each of my three footnotes here add contexts. Here the context is the final Cantower in that series, *Cantower XXXXI*, which deals with doctrinal policy, doctrinal meanings quite remote from commonsense policies to which they give rise. The Childout Principle is one of seven doctrines listed there. I have moved forward quite a space since I wrote that at age 72: thus I draw attention to the principle there of ongoing accelerating adult growth.

talking that, *in maiore parte*,”² lifts an audience forward in a step on its little human way to serious understanding. This was a rare event in Lonergan’s life: scan his *Collected Works*, see what you find.³ You find mainly the pressure towards *haute vulgarization* that enshrouds Lonergan’s sketchings. Etchings, then, are a statistically successful effort to eat into the metal and mettle of fixed minds by suggested exercises. But in real growth of total psyche the suggested exercises have, alas, to be carried out. Otherwise, or unwise, the etching is skin-deep, a decalcomaniacal veneer but not a piercing, a tattoo that is a pleasant drumming in or up of comfortese: one simply adds to trapped talking of a previously shrunken word and world. Such seems to be, in the main, the world and words of Lonerganism.

Sketchings, as I hinted already, aid that psychic and intellectual shrinkage. Since we are on the topic of history and functional history here I would draw your attention to a single instance of this: the final essay of *Topics in Education*, which is on history, a sketching full of powerful suggestions, pointers towards etchings. But it needs to be read, etchingly and itchingly, with a line-by-line neural reaching for the meaning of etching and sketching.

Might we break forward from this present shrinkage through a struggle with luminous talk that draws especially on the human groups little invasions of understanding of these past four millennia? We must surely try for an operative glimpse of this new self- and group- luminosity. If we and the next generation fail, then later centuries will be lifted by the horrors of lonely talk to face the climb out of a deeper cycling of decline than ours.

One is helped in all this humbling humic stuff by the best of religiosity’s darkness, especially when meshed with an aesthetic lift: but that is another story of sketching and etching.

²See *Collection*, 22. The essay, “Finality, Love, Marriage” is a relevant context for the present considerations of luminous adverting to etching recurrent-schemes of talk.

³Is the ABC exercise, available in four places, such an achievement? I do not think so. Perhaps the square root exercise qualifies, as it is presented by me, accurately, in *Phenomenology and Logic*, 9-10. I recall, if I am not mistaken, the final lecture Lonergan ever gave, in Boston College: it was sad to see him presenting that exercise with shaking hand. Fr.Crowe, always modest, showed me once a scribble-page where, he said, Bernie tried to get the point across to him and failed. You may find my own presentation, available on the Website, useful: *Wealth of Self*, chapter 3, which is a chapter of etchings. Compare also the pointers towards etchings of *Cantowers XXVII-XXXI* with the five first sketching chapters of *Insight*, which they parallel.