

Joistings 9

How might I become a better teacher?

Is the question of the title your question, as a teacher? Indeed, is it your question even if you are not a teacher: for we all teach. But we can return to that topic at the end. Meantime, let us keep our reflections in the context of teaching.

I have already written on this topic in *Divyadaan*, under the title “A Reform of Classroom Performance”, but here I would wish us to be more existential.¹ Us: you and I. Yes, the question is mine, even at 73, as I muse seriously these days about some teaching I shall be doing in a month’s time to a group that includes people from Korea, India, Ireland, Canada, etc. How might I so twist my words - and prior to that my sights and molecules - so as to better lift us all forward in that gathering? So the title question is mine. Might it be yours?

Certainly it might, but my starting question is more discomfoting. It reminds me of the learned professor who remarked about a difficulty regarding knowing God, “now, that is a very interesting question”. His stance and voice intimated that it really was not his interest. And there is the sad fact of our present English-speaking culture that we can sum this up in the quip, “it is a merely academic question”: we are a long way from Plato’s concern in the Academy.

So, if your honesty allows you to admit to yourself that this culture has indeed corrupted you, then I am getting to you here, even annoying you: but perhaps also leading you on: “What is this weird old Irishman at?” The first section of that previous

¹The article is in *Divyadaan* (13), 2002, 279-309. A following article is also on the topic: “The Wonder of Water: The Legacy of Lonergan”, *Divyadaan*,(15), 2004, 457-75. I refer to these later simply as *Divyadaan* 2002 and *Divyadaan* 2004. To what degree is our conversation existential, biography reaching to biography in concrete history? Part of my thesis is that present structures do not help. You might break from them, if you are seriously bitten, by speaking back to me, pmcshane@shaw.ca .

article on classroom performance ends with a recalling of my answer to the question “what is Lonergan getting at?”. The answer was, “he is getting at you”.

Here, Lonergan is not the point, and I would have you notice that the point goes strangely deep. Indeed, it is the central point of a previous book, titled *The Redress of Poise*.² What is our existential poise in this encounter of ours? Are we not reaching “biography to biography in history,”³ in the story of our becoming? Is there not a sense in which all our language is a How-Language?⁴ Is there not a sense in which all our talk is talk of the Way, the *Tao*? Or, I should say, a normative sense, that is presently a feeble presence. *How?* : *quomodo* in Latin, but from the Indo-European base, *kwo-*, *kwe-*, present in the Sanskrit, *ka*. There used to be that common low humour in America that took “how” as an American Indian greeting, but there is a deeper sense in which it should be all our greetings. That strange poet Rainer Maria Rilke wrote “love consists in this that two solitudes guard and bind and greet each other”, To greet, concretely, is to gather each other forward, piccolo notes in the symphony of history.

So I dare to greet you in your becoming. “Might I become, might I become a better teacher?” But I must ease back my greeting now to a certain minimalism if I am to win a greeting from you rather than a growl. Later we can muse more broadly about

²*The Redress of Poise*, written in the 1990s, is available free on www.philipmcshane.ca . The title is a transposition of one by fellow-Irish and Ulsterman Seamas Heaney, whose book, *The Redress of Poetry*, (Farrar, Giroux and Strauss, New York, 1993) points to the culturally transformative power of poetry. Poetry needs, I would claim, a much larger context, even within its own world. That larger context would be part of the development of the final topics of this essay, on the axial dynamics of history. Worth absorbing in the present context are the last two chapters of Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, University of Toronto Press, 1993.

³This is the part of the middle sentence of the middle chapter of *The Redress of Poise*.

⁴“How-Language: Works?” is the title of the second chapter of P. McShane, *A Brief History of Tongue. From Big Bang to Coloured Wholes*, Axial Press, Halifax, 2000. It makes a beginning on pointing towards distant shifts in linguistic meaning. An elementary Axial Press work with the same drive is mentioned in note 9 below. Axial books are available from drage@ns.sympatico.ca .

becoming, about what is needed to dispel the lie of ordinariness. “What is needed is a qualitative change in me, a shift in the centre of my existing from the concerns manifested in the *bavardage quotidien* towards the participated yet never in this life completely established eternity that is tasted in aesthetic apprehension.”⁵ But back to the minimalism. Perhaps, as a teacher, that minimalism is already familiar to you? That minimalism can be captured in a brief statement, “one cannot give an appreciation by giving a definition: one needs an appeal to experience”.

You notice the problem with this bogus captivity? The brief statement captures nothing unless you have already been captivated. Captivates? What captivates is the story-teller, the song, the sunset. Such address calls subtly to our lonely molecules, edgy for ecstasy. Can such address be mimed in cold classroom where definitions settle like grave ashes on blackboards, bored white? Can such address be mimed here? That address was, indeed, part of my effort in the previous article, on the wonder of water, where I invited you to play naked in pond of Kamala Das and Archimedes and God. The effort there was towards reading better the first page of that large book, *Insight*. Might I be a better teacher? The answer there was a pointing to the challenge of becoming a better learner, a better reader, summed up in its final sentence. “The escape and the escapade is to reading *Insight* with more lonely molecular care, more sense of the gift that is the universe, the gift that is to be embrace, the gift that is our common contemplative urge to bathe naked in the pond of God.”⁶

But back to my minimalist principle, with another twist towards its appreciation. So I pull in a statement that is minimalism at its most hilarious. Bernard Lonergan, at age 66, is having a shot at communicating what systematic understanding is. He writes a second last chapter of a very serious book to thus communicate, “Systematics”. It is, I would say, a pretty unsuccessful shot precisely because he was minimalist, mixing his

⁵B.Lonergan, in a book-review, *Gregorianum*, 1955.

⁶*Divyadaan*, 2004, 475.

minimalism with elitism.⁷ But within that minimalism there is a gem of minimalism, indeed the heart of the minimalism in this article of mine, packed into the end of a Lonergan footnote: “The key issue is whether concepts result from understanding or understanding results from concepts.”⁸

That, I would say, sums up the central challenge of being a good teacher and being a teacher on the move to being a better teacher: but it sums up only as a word to the already wise. In my previous life as a teacher in an institution which shall be nameless we used have a day at the beginning of each year - none of us were thrilled about it - and occasionally it was focused directly on the topic of being a competent teacher. I recall the last such day. The entire day was focused by learned speakers “from out of town” on strategies that took their stand on understanding resulting from concepts. It was deadly. Have you had this experience? There, now or then, is an experience that may bring a glint of appreciation to your eye. But for some it may be a glint of disturbance, even of curiosity. For perhaps that deadly view has been your stand, fostered in you by years of bad guidance. It is, after all, the standard operative view in all subjects, east, west and south.⁹ But is it your stand, perhaps your operative stand, even though you may well agree with me, that concepts emerge only from appreciation.

⁷*Method in Theology*, 350-51, where he points to elitism at the beginning and end of his appeal.

⁸*Method in Theology*, 336, note 1.

⁹This may strike you as an extraordinary claim, and I obviously cannot enlarge on it here. It is a central topic in a small book from Axial Publications, Cape Breton, 2005, written by three teachers, John Benton, Alessandra Drage and Philip McShane: *Introducing Critical Thinking*. The teachers’ experience expressed there spans disciplines from physics and physical education to poetry and cinema. The book, moreover, stands against a solid tradition of books on Critical Thinking for which, indeed, understanding results from concepts. The book is being used for a grade 12 philosophy course in a Canadian school, and no doubt will disturb some teachers.

I used there the word *appreciation* instead of the word *understanding*. It has a broader tone, indeed what I might call, and hope to share with you, a molecular reach. Notice the twisting in my writing here; for I am writing about an appreciation of appreciation.¹⁰ In that previous article I wrote of a teacher of mathematics of my school days called Kit who was amazingly toned, tuned, in the pacing of his words and his feet, towards a stirring of our molecules towards sum tolerance and the proper ingesting of formulae. That recalling for me led me to title the next section of the article, “Educational Kit”. Educational kit, of course, is not a package to be purchase, the purchase that one has is one’s incarnation of the topic and the How of the topic.

But before I invite our further musing on that incarnation and identity, let us pause over a simple instance of the operation of my minimalist assumption, that concepts emerge from an effort to appreciate. The simple instance relates to syllogistic arguments, like the standard “All men are mortal / Socrates is a man / therefore Socrates is mortal”. This illustration, I suspect, will cause impatience or annoyance in some teachers more interested in aesthetic education, but I would ask those to bear with me. We shall connect up with those more complex educational areas presently: though you must realize that what this little article is about is a massive change of ethos, a quite new literature of teaching. Our little instance goes to the heart of the many flaws in the present literature on Critical Thinking, and indeed it goes to the heart of the impossibility of teaching geometry from books written in the style of Euclid. Both the literature on critical thinking and Euclidean presentations would have us imagine that we think logically. We do not.

But let us check this out in a simple illustration that helps us to find out where syllogisms (three-line arguments) come from.

¹⁰Indeed, in the full context one must speak of the appreciation of appreciations of appreciations, but that is quite another topic. See chapter 2 of P.McShane *ChrISt in History*, Axial Press, 2005.

In a circle of, say, unit radius, two diameters, perpendicular to each other, are drawn. From an arbitrary point P on the circumference two perpendiculars PR and PS are drawn to the two diameters. The problem is, What is the ratio of RS to the radius? You have now drawn the figure? Perhaps even solved the puzzle? Your reaction to the puzzle and your solution of it will depend very much on your habits of mathematics. If mathematics leaves you cold, then you may find it hard enough to make a proper diagram much less solve the puzzle. If you are a mathematician then the solution is just too obvious. If you fall in between these two extremes then you may draw and mark and puzzle, even try trigonometry. Joining R and S will be an evident thing to do; but it may take a pedagogue to adequately dispose the phantasm by the drawing of another line. The line to draw is the line joining the center to the point P, say OP. Eureka! With the insight emerges the solution, the relation between RS and the radius.

Now note that the solution can be formulated or thrown into syllogistic form, and this will help you get some light on features of the syllogism which are often misrepresented. We have, therefore, the syllogism:

$$\begin{aligned} &RS = OP \\ \text{and } &OP = \text{Radius;} \\ \text{therefore } &RS = \text{Radius.} \end{aligned}$$

In this light we may note important characteristics of procedure. We started, not with two premises, but with the conclusion in the form:

$$RS \quad ? \quad \text{Radius}$$

Our search, through diagram, was for a middle term, and the middle term was supplied as soon as one adverted to the significance of OP. Only then can the syllogism be constructed. To coin an expression for this construction, one might say that the insight in crystallized into a syllogism. This does not mean, of course, that somehow the insight has been pinned down on a page. What has happened is that we have given the insight an expression in symbols that helps us hold on to the connections.

Now let us do just that with regard to the above syllogism: we want to glimpse just what the problem is of “getting to grips with a logical proof” of any length. So, we re-express the argument of the syllogism:

If ($RS = OP$, and $OP = \text{Radius}$) **then** ($RS = \text{Radius}$).

This is the same argument, is it not? But we have added symbols, **If ... then**, and bracketed off the conclusion as conclusion, **then** Note what the added symbols do: they express the deeper problem of learning. The bracketing following **If** tells us that we have to get, beget in our minds, the connections within the brackets if we are to really have, hold, be master or mistress of the conclusion. So what if we don't? Perhaps you can recall days of studying Euclid's geometry? Then instead of two lines you have perhaps ten, so you have a big If (10 connections). Neither Euclid nor perhaps the teacher helped you here. So you ended up memorizing the proof. Perhaps you never recovered from this? And perhaps you are teaching geometry in that same old helpless way? Then for you this could be a beginning of better teaching: only a beginning, for, as we shall see further on, there are layers of problems of what I call *operative identification*.

But meantime one may conjure up, fantasize about, more complex illustrations of ineffective deductive presentations. Let us stay with Euclid for the moment: though you may surprise yourself by checking for parallels in the study of literature or even in the strategics of sports. One favorite of mine from Euclid is the famous theorem of Pythagoras. Check out Euclid's proof and see can you do something like we did with the simple problem above. The real proving begins with a puzzle. The puzzle leads to a diagram, with which you may have to juggle for an hour or a day. Then you jump to the conclusion and go on to write out the **If** (.....). In the case of Pythagoras, there are some diagrams that are much better than Euclid's, that allow the answer to 'stare you in the face': perhaps you know one?¹¹

¹¹*Divyadaan* 2004 details a particular Indian achievement in presenting Pythagoras' famous theorem.

Another instance that may help in that it comes from a quite different zone of inquiry. It happens to be a present preoccupation of mine: it is Christian, but again, you may find in your own tradition of Sacred Books a similar problem.

Christian Theology includes a discussion of the divinity of Christ as portrayed by the New Testament. An old style of presentation gathers what were called *proof-texts*. So, one lists 10 or fifty such texts that can be plausibly read as expressing the claim that Jesus was/is divine. Is there safety in numbers? At all events, the student has them presented with some tinge of this view. So we get a type of long argument: **If** (10, 50), **Then** Jesus was divine. But, leaning on the parallel, you can notice the missing essential. As the Little Prince notes, "the essential is invisible to the eye." What is needed is that effort of personal creativity and contemplation that pulls together the 10 or fifty texts in context. What is missing is the integral understanding; what is regularly missing in teaching and in instructions regarding prayer is the invitation to struggle towards it.

Of course, this brings up the much larger problem of basic attitude. The fundamental - by which I do not mean fundamentalist - attitude is one of Faith seeking understanding. That was the attitude of the early Christian community, both orthodox and odd, right up to John of Damascus in the eight century and beyond.¹² There was a search for the historical Jesus that is quite far removed from the search in recent centuries. How much of the twist in the search has to do with the view that concepts are the basis of understanding, indeed that concepts are everything and understanding is an illusion?¹³ And, of course, the people who talk of concepts generally have no serious concepts: perhaps that is why the name of analytic philosophy in Britain changed from *Conceptual Analysis* to *Linguistic Analysis*?

¹²One finds a thematic of "faith seeking understanding" already a formal presence in Origen's *Peri Archon* (On First Principles).

¹³One can relate this to the massive modern disease of *haute vulgarization*. See the index to Lonergan, *Complete Works*, vol. 6, on *haute vulgarization*.

It will take a vast amount of contrafactual history in these next generations to reveal the damage to education done by Scotus (1265-1308).¹⁴ I have to hand at the moment two texts that illustrate the brutalizing effect of that fundamental disorientation, one in school chemistry, one in first year university economics. Both are worth pausing over here, and since I have already reflected on these in another relevant context, why not just bring you the reflections from those contexts? And, fortunately, my reflections on chemistry introduce us to the second text, that on economics.

So, I quote myself, but note that I am my first reader here and now. Part of my thesis, as we shall see, is that this conversation is an advance for me, and it is.¹⁵ But how easy it is to read as if one understood!

“28.4 Teaching School Chemistry: or Anything Else

I have often recalled, in writing and lecturing, my advantage in having a mathematics teacher in school who was vibrantly incarnate about the stuff. I had the same experience in the two years of school chemistry: a dedicated Christian Brother who delighted in introducing us to sights and smells and bangs. My university chemistry, on the other hand, was dead and deadening. In more recent years, I have struggled with the problems of local school kids. This year’s mathematics’ texts for grade 11 and 12 in Nova Scotia, for instance, were quite exceptional: for all my background I could not make them out.

¹⁴In a lengthy footnote (note 126 on page 39) in *Verbum. Word and Idea in Aquinas* (University of Toronto Press, 1997) Lonergan sketches the history of Scotus’ influence right up through Kant to present Thomism. Nor is the influence absent in the performative meaning of Lonergan scholars: I have heard such scholars speak solemnly of “clarifying a concept”. Add the context of note 19 below.

¹⁵Add the context of notes 27, 28 and 29 below. The long quotation to follow in the text here is from Cantower 28 (available on www.philipmcschane.ca) and it is also part of *Introducing Critical Thinking*, chapter 43, on Chemistry. There are other chapters in *Introducing Critical Thinking* on mathematics, physics, botany, zoology, psychology etc that bring out present flawed educational structures.

What of the chemistry texts used in our local school? I have to hand the text of the Canadian Maritimes for these grades, and I shall use it as an example. The text is Frank Jenkins *et al.*, *Nelson Chemistry*, Thompson Canada Limited, 1996. I shall refer to it below as **Chemistry**.

This business of exemplifying is important, and is caught in the meaning of the title which refers to teaching anything. We are up against a cultural *ethos* of serial killing: Jack and Jill the rippers are not, then, the oddities: the oddities are those few teachers who can somehow beat the system, the unsung heroines and heroes. But Jack and Jill in the classrooms are really only victims: the knife in their hand is wielded by the cult that generates the texts and the courses, that seeks to control the formation of teachers in committedly truncated B.ED. programs. I am writing, then, not just of chemistry, but of a dedicated truncation, blood-spilling, of the next generation, at school and university level in almost all topics. And the notion of exemplifying is important, because there surely is no need to repeat in detail what can be made brutally obvious in any one area. So I could be writing here of a text in any other science, in the literatures, the arts, at any level of education. In that sense, the present section could be seen as superfluous, since I have previous written of the sickness when I dealt with that abominable text by Mankiw in a chapter that borrows his own chapter-title "Thinking Like an Economist". The Text in question is Gregory Mankiw (which rhymes with thankyou), *Principles of Economics*, The Dryden Press, Montreal, 1997. I shall refer to it as Mankiw. The chapter which uses Mankiw's title, is chapter 3 of Bruce Anderson and Philip McShane, *Beyond Establishment Economics. No Thank You, Mankiw*, Axial Press, Halifax, 2002.

That last-mentioned book exemplifies the possibility of teaching by using a confused or bad text, such as Chemistry is. But carrying this through the course and the text is a tricky business, especially if your efforts are unsupported by the community of teachers and students and harassed by the pressure of principal and program. One

owes it to the students to get them through the hoops etc etc. With a little cunning, strategies of memorization can be worked out, and strategies of handling exams.

In my own odd career of teaching a range of subjects I found that one can teach quite well from a bad text. But one has to struggle towards lifting the culture of the students. How is that done? One makes a beginning by introducing something like the first section of the chapter 3 of *Beyond Establishment Economics*: 'How do you and I really think?', is your question to and with the class. With luck you will end up with them having some suspicion about themselves that corresponds to the diagrams of knowing and doing regularly repeated by me from Appendix A of Lonergan's *Phenomenology and Logic*. But you have to struggle with suitable illustrations within the topic of your class. Obviously, the illustrations most available are the illustrations given in the textbook with which you are afflicted. I have around me texts for university and school in different areas, and I hope you have one such text. Check out the introductory chapter or section about 'What we are doing?', be it Grammar, Biology, Psychology, whatever. Digest it critically, then see about lifting the students towards a new level of reading.

A key test, for yourself and for the students and for the author, is the way that the word concept is used. Dare I ask you to pause and be honest about your own spontaneous use of the word **Concept**?

Chemistry is quite standard in the way the topic is introduced: so you don't need this particular text to struggle with the key problem of post-axial teaching. There is an Introduction for the student which focuses on the question **What is Science?** : a big serious black question which manages to miss the question mark's centrality to science. So it begins: "Science involves *describing, predicting and explaining* nature". On the side of the page a question-less diagram is laid on, laid on the student like a yoke. It is a diagram that is repeated, with elaborations, in "Appendix B. Scientific Problem Solving", which spreads over five pages what was said at the beginning in three. "Every investigation in science has a *purpose*, to develop a scientific concept to test a scientific concept". Need I go on? As John Wayne used to say, "Not hardly".

The description is way off. But notice how axial presentation has made it plausible, acceptable, brutally normative? Recall Archimedes' book *On Floating Bodies* as we discussed it. Recall the lay-out of Euclid. Yes: start with a theorem-statement and develop 'the concept' that it contains; Way To Go! But alas, it is bad teaching: and it is not in the rhythm of scientific procedure. What does it relate to? It relates, on the good side, to the polish and convenience of axiomatic unification. On the bad side, it is of a piece with the floating body of stuff that has been sinking teaching and thinking since Dun Scotus invented conceptual analysis.

Now you may well claim that I exaggerate. The kids do learn chemistry. You may even say that they come out of this with the Basic Concepts of chemistry. So, we get back to the question, What do you mean by Concept? Are you not perhaps dangerously close to an identification of the meaning with a precise verbal definition that is memorized? And could this not be the dominant mode of learning in the chemistry class, dominating the occasional venture and adventure into curiosity-driven searching-messing? I recall year in which my main task was to educate professors. The chair of the chemistry department was in my seminar group and he was most enlightening about the sad fact that graduating in chemistry required a good memory and some cooking skills. The joy of successful learning was solidly replaced by a convenient deadly dullness.

Chemistry certainly could be analyzed in detail. One might note the regular occurrence of the "Investigation Insert" (pp. 38, 62, 76, 95, 98, 115,) that dully repeats the adopted procedure. One might note the massive coloured cover-up of distractions. I give a single illustration. Consider, then, the "Box" on p. 115.

"3.3 Demonstration: Determining an Empirical Formula

The purpose of this demonstration is to illustrate how the technological process of electrolysis may be used to determine empirically the chemical formula of water. ...

Problem

What is the chemical formula for water?

Prediction

According to previous memorization, the chemical formulas for water is H₂O.

Experimental Design

Water is decomposed in a Hoffman apparatus etc"

You don't have to be an astrochemist to sense that this is way off, line by brutal line, as teaching."

So much for that text, **Chemistry**. No doubt you can track down parallel texts in other areas. And there is that little exercise I used to give my students who were taking psychology or sociology in tandem with our class: check the indices of the books in these courses for the occurrence of the word *Question*. How far we have come in this wonderland of western civilization! You may recall Gandhi's reply when asked what he thought of western civilization: "It's a wonderful idea".

I have written enough about the Mankiw text to make you suspicious of its teaching method. It has, alas, the added disadvantage of being radically wrong about economics: that makes it all the more ludicrously sad that Mankiw is now advisor to President Bush!

But one small section from that chapter on "Thinking Like an Economist" is a neat summary that could be of help in your musings. It returns us to the main minimal point of this essay. Here it is:

"There are two distinct views of how you, and we mean, *you*, reach understanding: either you puzzle over some given situation and arrive at an **understanding** that leaves you with what is called a **concept**, or you somehow pick up **concepts** as you move through life, or an economics class, and you have to analyze them to make **sense** of them. The first view we call the *MAC* view: the second view we call the *McA* view. The first view, in which the *A* stands for the sequence *ah?* and *ah!*, is the view of Aristotle, Aquinas, and you and us. The second view is the dominant view, the view of Mankiw. It is associated with Scotus and with the British tradition of conceptual Analysis. It is a view that murders education. A good teacher gives

illustrations, uses images, encourages curiosity and questions, so that the class slowly catch on and reach the ability to **define** for themselves. A bad teacher is clear and gives so-called definitions - which are actually only lengthy, if suggestive names - invites memory work, cuts off the horizon shift of serious understanding."¹⁶

I end that chapter of reflections on "thinking like an economist" by talking of the task of sniffing out "Mankiw's model of knowing as it haunts your efforts. It is no small achievement to begin to challenge an Establishment that sweetly eats your soul, that does not have the decency to be demonic."¹⁷

I am only giving impressions of that task here, in instances that are close to scientific knowing. But you may be a teacher of history, or literature. Does Mankiw's or Scotus' model of knowing haunt your teaching efforts there? Is there something parallel in the tradition to the attitude of the gathering of proof-texts in, say, the analysis of a poem or of a period of history?

Analysis means something altogether different in the *MAC* perspective than it does in the *McA* perspective, but in these human zones there is the further complication of what I might call the personal molecular dimensions.¹⁸ To read a poem properly is to let your molecules be rubbed the right way, and that rubbing is lifted by a live memory of memorization. To breath in the story of a period of humanity is to lung in, to be invited to lung in, the story-teller's breathe and breadth of molecular and imaginative vision.

And, alas, there is the real rub, or rubbing. There may be all sorts of problems of unruly classes, idiot syllabuses, mind-destroying school meetings and reports, but the heart of the matter in the problem of communication is the incarnate meaning of the communicator, his or her character, his or her increasingly integral identity. What you

¹⁶*Beyond Establishment Economics*, 51.

¹⁷*Beyond Establishment Economics*, 62.

¹⁸A massive topic. For some pointers see notes 19 , 24, 27, 28, 29 below.

do with the incarnate mess of students, principals, board, syllabus, whatever: that is just another slice of your identity crisis in this crisis time.

So let me swing forward now, as promised, to larger issues within the question, “How might I become a better teacher?” If you are a *McA* teacher, than obviously, if you are sincere, you have some catch-up work to do, and it can be deeply difficult. A beginner’s insight into how you actually think and learn does not make easy a break with the habits of a lifetime.¹⁹ If you are a *MAC* teacher, then you will still have the problem not only of personally growing but also of cunningly nudging the institution towards sanity. In both cases you enter into some of the tasks sketched by Lonergan in *Insight* or modestly by the little book *Introducing Critical Thinking*. And in both cases there are ongoing problems of identification. “To appropriate truth is to make it one’s own,”²⁰ and the problem of identification is the second of three associated problems in this appropriation. So let’s hear a thunderous Lonergan paragraph on the topic: after forty nine years reading it I still find it dense, so don’t despair!

“Secondly, there is the problem of identification. By insights one grasps unities and correlations; but besides the unity, there are the elements to be unified; and besides the correlations, there are the elements to be distinguished and related. Until one gets the insight, one has no clue (apart from the direction given by a teacher) for picking out accurately the elements that are to be unified or related. But once the insight is reached, one is able to find in one’s own experience just what it is that falls under the insight’s grasp and what lies outside it. However, ability is one thing, and performance is another. Identification is performance. Its effect is to make one possess the insight as one’s own, to be assured in one’s use of it, to be familiar with the range of its relevance.

¹⁹Lonergan in *Insight* talks of the grounding insight, a “lightening flash of illumination” that can occur in therapy (*Insight* 201[224]). But full “therapy is an appropriation of one’s own feelings” (*Method in Theology*, 34, note 6), and is obviously meshed into the problem of identification that we touch on here.

²⁰*Insight*, 558[582].

Aristotle remarked, I think, that if one understands, one can teach. But the understanding that enables one to teach adds identification to insight. By that addition one is able to select and arrange and indicate to others the combination of sensible elements that will give rise to the same insight in them. One is able to vary the elements at the demand of circumstances. One is able to put the questions that elicit from the pupil indications of his blind-spots and, then, to proceed afresh to the task of bringing him to the prior insights he must reach before he masters the present lesson."²¹

"Identification is performance" - does this remind you of Aristotle's version of the virtuous person or of some *Tao* reflections on identity? But now we might try for a change of pace, indeed a shift into a proper scientific inquiry. For, up to now, we could be doing little more than describing two basic spontaneities: the *MAC* spontaneity and the *McA* spontaneity. Both can be quite unreflective. Neither my teacher, Kit, nor Jesus - and you may replace the name of Jesus with any of the great gurus of the past - were into the self-attention of **method**, which is a novel level of inquiry as difficult as good zoology. Performative self-identity is quite another level of difficulty: yet there it was, pretty evident - for those of you have eyes to seize - in my Childout Principle, put before you previously.²² "When teaching children geometry one is teaching children children".

The principle is a good instance of the layered meanings of some doctrines.²³ It has an initial commonsense meaning, which goes with what we have already pondered

²¹*Insight*, 558-9[582].

²²*Divyadaan* 2004, section 1.

²³It is a good test, too, of one's view of functional specialization and of the seriously scientific nature of a future theology or philosophy. A serious scientific doctrine - and that includes religious doctrines that are the focus of the sixth functional specialty - should be incomprehensible to common sense. It is on a different plane of meaning. This, of course, poses the problem of ex-plane-ing to the plane of common sense, the plane of plain meaning. Some points on this are introduced at the end of chapter three of my *Lack in the Beingstalk. A Giants Causeway*, Axial Press, Halifax, 2005.

upon in this brief article. Then the main puzzle is the duplication of the word *children* at the end, which is somewhat like the duplication of *per second* at the end of the naming of acceleration: “gravity causes an acceleration of 32 feet per second per second”.

Understanding the duplication takes a serious scientific effort. “Teaching children children” - and that includes the teacher as child, as growing - points us towards a huge effort of fantasy regarding the new control of performative meaning that goes with the second time of the temporal subject, the third stage of human meaning, a time and stage that may not belong in this millennium.²⁴ That meaning of the principle is, thus, remote in fact, but also remote in heuristic science. It is much more difficult than a medieval person trying to envisage the scientific and technological revolution of the twentieth century. What would it be like to have the **capacity, need**, that is each human meshed into institutions that are **tasks** and the **roles** of humanization?²⁵

The core of the road to that new humanity is the full presence of the Childout Principle, which is merely a palatable version of generalized empirical method. “Generalized empirical method operates on a combination of both the data of sense and the data of consciousness: it does not treat of objects without taking into account the corresponding operations of the subject; it does not treat of the subject’s operations without taking into account the corresponding objects.”²⁶ Such has been the complexification of human living over these past millennia that uncomprehended

²⁴The third stage of meaning would be familiar to readers of Lonergan’s *Method in Theology*. It can be taken to correspond to the second time of the temporal subject, a notion Lonergan introduced in his systematic treatise on the Trinity (see the index of the forthcoming volume 12 of Lonergan’s *Complete Works*). The second stage of meaning I identify as the Axial Period, a long confused period that includes but transposes Jasper’s axial period. It stretches forward from, perhaps, the emergence of written meanings through this millennium. How far it thus stretches depends on you.

²⁵The boldfaced words in these final paragraphs recall the display of related terms that Lonergan gives in *Method in Theology* page 48, a display that I introduced early in *Divyadaan* 2004.

²⁶B.Lonergan, *A Third Collection*, Paulist Press, 1985, 141, the top three lines.

spontaneity must be replaced by luminous self-presence: a growing appreciation of what one is doing within the very doing. So, e.g. class and teacher are to learn themselves together, but at different paces within that very hour of class.²⁷ But will that **class** [kin to the Latin, *calare*, to call] of later generations bear any resemblance to the false drive, the disoriented anxiety,²⁸ of present structures? Or will it rather echo the best of primitive apprenticeship? Whatever: it is to emerge from **liberty**²⁹ surging up through creative **personal relations**, beginning now with the vitality of your question, How might I become a better teacher?

²⁷“Learning themselves together” but at different paces. One’s growth in meaning would seem to be a function of one’s previous growth, somewhat analogous to the mathematics of e^x : $d/dx (e^x) = e^x$. With this heuristic goes a principle that complements the Childout Principle which I have called the Chilledout Principle, a fundamental principle of adult growth which sublates the Proustian notion of growth in aesthetic meaning.. But that is a topic for another day. See “The New Empiricism of Teaching and Research”, *Divyadaan* (17) 2006.

²⁸Both Lonergan and Harry Stack Sullivan attempt to make a new view of **anxiety** central to the dynamics of human growth (see Lonergan: the indices of both *Insight* and *Phenomenology and Logic* on Sullivan). But it would seem altogether too soon in the millennium to try to close in on a basic heuristic that would counter the current global schizothymia. Useful here is Candace Pert’s little book, *Molecules of Emotion. The Science behind Mind-Body Medicine*, Touchstone Paperback, 2000.

²⁹See note 25 above. First, recall that luminous **liberty** is central to countering the longer cycle of decline so brutally portray by Lonergan in the end part of chapter 7 of *Insight*. “There is such a thing as progress and its principle is **liberty**”(*Insight*, 234[259]). Secondly, note the oddity of the display of terms on page 48 of **Method in Theology**. The first line points to particular goods; the second line points to the actual good of order, all that is, now. But what then of the third line? It is, indeed, part of the good of order, but it is the presence of finality - or anxiety, or the cosmic groaning of St. Paul’s “anxious longing of the creation”(Romans 8:19) - that is not a vague presence but a normative presence where two or three are gathered in the *ousia* of finitude, in conversations such as this. **Personal relations** are flawed if they are not leaning towards mutual surprise.