

*Joistings 11***Small Steps Towards Functional Collaboration**

If I am to deal here with small steps that can be realistically attempted, then it would seem foolish to wish you to pick up on the complex perspective that I have developed on functional collaboration, and I dodge that foolishness here.<sup>1</sup> What I wish to do in this essay is to make a beginning through enlarging on one small stepping that could help; my hope is that other pointers and suggestions will be forthcoming in 2006, in response to my appeal for a beginning of collaboration. Still, a fresh glimpse of what the collaboration is all about is motivational and can generate a group ethos.

Might I claim that the whole business is about apologetics in a quite fresh sense? The full rich sense of that apologetics, of course, belongs in the context that we are avoiding at present, but let us consider that the relevant apology is self-defense: so we hang in with the usual meaning of apology. But the self in question now is the globe of selves, and the defense of self becomes a defense of all selves. Further, if the defense is really on the pragmatic ball, then it should be beautifully efficient.<sup>2</sup> Our position, and

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<sup>1</sup>The entire *Cantower* series was focused in the integral implementation of *Insight* and *Method*. It was abandoned after 41 of the 117 Cantowers when an opportunity arose to promote functional specialization, the result being the two series of 8 *SOFDAWAREs* and 21 *Quodlibets*. Various forms of collaboration may lead us aback to these searches for larger perspectives. This is especially true of interest in implementation page 250 of *Method*, the key page of the book: some 200 pages of the essays mentioned are devoted to the understanding of this page.

<sup>2</sup>My regular reference here is to a single line of Lonergan's writing: line 16 of page 160 of *Topics in Education*. Efficiency is to be a characteristic of an adequate methodology. That nudge of Lonergan can lead us to pause over present strategies of teaching, writing, convening, dialoging etc etc. What real effect has our conference dialogue with Girard, our published criticism of Derrida, our sympathy with the struggle of Voegelin? Such reflections can help us towards seeking a more excellent way. But all this relates to later topics in our *Joistings* efforts. And I would note here that I do not attempt to enlarge on the beautiful efficiency that I expect from our tackling the step I suggest here: but the manner in which it may weave into and disturb the closed "mindfulness" of cognitive psychology may dawn on readers of the previous *Joistings*.

Lonergan's, is that if this is to come about, then the defense has to be massively novel, a cosmopolis that is both global and subtle in its stand for the defendant. "The apologist's task is to aid others in integrating God's gift with the rest of their living."<sup>3</sup> But let us not leap immediately to some religious dimension: there is Aristotle's incarnate wonder to be considered as gift, and its axial cosmic disintegration to be considered as "the basic form of alienation."<sup>4</sup>

Now the process of arriving at efficient small steps is the process of bringing this view to bear, and to bear fruit, on the streets. And, in its fullness, that process has to be, not a random business, but a global reach. So, our small steps, as we shall see, will always be reaching for the global reach. The defense of selves may home in on a classroom or a church or homeless persons, but the ethos of the defense is to be, and ever to edge closer to, a full global reach, "a generalized apologetic conducted in an ecumenic spirit, aiming ultimately at a comprehensive view."<sup>5</sup>

Let us bring this perspective, in so far as we share it, to bear on a possibility that might be thought of as a small step. It is the first on my own list: if it does not grab you or fit in with your present possibilities, then generate your own items for your list, our list, and see about fostering their implementation either privately or in public collaboration. I offer collaboration, but it would be better if somehow the Lonergan movement - for that is my main area of appeal - adverted effectively, in groups here and there, to the power of Lonergan's fundamental contribution to integrative human progress.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>*Method in Theology*, 123.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>6</sup>In some of the Joistings to follow, however, I do offer a foundational assistance in my efforts to suggest the road to efficient metaphysical control. The point is made broadly in "Obstacles to Metaphysical Control" *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies*, 2006. The steps we take in this direction during 2006 will aid us in controlling and ordering our various

That power is to be manifested, become effective, in what I would call a “duality of interference”. What is that duality? It is neatly presented in the two-part article I wrote as the first in a series of education, “Improving Classroom Performance”. The first part of that article emphasized individual performance; the second part turned to the problem of shifting the culture towards and through functional collaboration.<sup>7</sup> So, in seeking for entry points into the reversal of decline, one seeks points that not only “turn around” individuals, but also invite groups to shift, clumsily at first, into the cosmopolis of global collaboration in the area in question.

I come, now, to my first apology, to be effectively shared by some of you: it is to and for first year university students the world over. I shall be brief on the matter, and this brevity relates to the fact that these next *Joistings* aim to be clearly doctrinal. One of the grounds of the failure of the book *Insight* was that its doctrinal character was not evident, so that it could read it as if it was not a set of exercises. This first apology relates to the same rescue mission as Lonergan wished to initiate with *Insight*, but its concrete reference leaves no doubt regarding the difficulty of its achievement, the grim climb to its initiation.

What is the problem? I have named it as a task of the Vancouver gathering of August 2007:<sup>8</sup> “The Cultural Problem of First-year University Texts”. The problem has

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contributions in the conference to be held in August (see note 8 below) but it should be of general significance..

<sup>7</sup>The article was published in *Divyadaan. Journal of Philosophy and Education XXX* , but it is also available in Cantower 6. The second article in the series is available in Cantower 27. The third and fourth articles are available as *Joistings 9* and *Joistings 10*. That first article is clearly divided into a first consideration of individual performance and a second consideration of the larger cultural shift towards functional specialization. The other essays weave round that duality.

<sup>8</sup>The Conference is to be held at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Monday August 15<sup>th</sup> - Friday August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2007. For reflections on it check with me at [pmcshane@shaw.ca](mailto:pmcshane@shaw.ca) . [The Conference of 2006 is to have as topic “An Efficient Method of Global Collaboration towards Progress”, which represents a re-write of *Method in Theology*]. I

been with me since I first taught such courses in 1959, in mathematical physics, in commerce, in engineering. I had to produce my own teaching notes to break from patterns of alienation in the tradition.<sup>9</sup> What are these patterns? Well, that discovery is the objective of our task.

You might find it useful to go to a definite piece of the task already attempted. I am thinking of the attempt made by Anderson and myself to expose the flaws in a first-year economics text by Gregory Mankiw.<sup>10</sup> The attempt had the cheeky title *Beyond Establishment Economics. No Thank You, Mankiw*.<sup>11</sup> The attempt was ineffective, and of course the very inefficiency is a nudge towards the fuller conception of the task. Recall

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would hope that volunteers would come forward to make an effort to critically locate both themselves and particular texts of different disciplines, and to nudge us all towards the double-drive mentioned in the text above at note 6. The experience should lead us to appreciate the manner in which disciplinary studies cannot avoid the merging of the history of the discipline with concrete history, so revealing the manner in which disciplines slope up to, converge on, a common dialectic of progress. This is a key operational strategy of functionality that only such exercises as this can reveal. Of course, we are not starting totally afresh. There is. e.g. the contents of volume 4 of *Journal of Macrodynamical Analysis*, which was devoted to efforts to implement functional work in Interpretation. The first Vancouver Conference focused in functional specialization in Christology, and the resulting book of the lectures by McShane. *ChrISt in History*, on the Website from December 2005, is a helpful read, especially chapter 5 on the concrete dynamics of group collaboration, and chapter 8 on the new view of generalized empirical method. A useful text that gives includes a critical chapter on each of most disciplines is *Introducing Critical Thinking* by John Benton, Alessandra Drage and Philip McShane, Axial Publications, Cape Breton, 2005.

<sup>9</sup>Of the notes that such teaching I only retained the notes on an honours course in mathematical physics, certainly available to anyone interested. The notes contrast with Feynman's famous courses of the following years. A consideration of Feynman's popularizations was to have been the centre of Cantower 54, "Quantumelectrodynamics, Pedagogy, Popularization", but that consideration should now become part of the larger topic of the merits and demerits of *haute vulgarization* in culture.

<sup>10</sup>Gregory Mankiw (rhymes with thankyou), *Principles of Macroeconomics*, Montreal: The Dryden Press, 1997.

<sup>11</sup>Bruce Anderson and Philip McShane, Axial Press, 2002.

our two quotations from Lonergan: “the apologist’s task is to aid others ...”<sup>12</sup> but the aid can become globally and statistically efficient only in so far as it moves to becoming “a generalized apologetic.”<sup>13</sup> The aid offered was in the zone of first-year economics, offered by a blunt criticism of Mankiw’s book. What would have an effect, or a better statistics of success? Again, details are left to collaborative reflection, but certainly the details involve us picking up creatively on Lonergan’s simple point about the apologist’s task. The solid aid would be the lift economic thinking to the level of functional collaboration as the key to breaking out of the shocking consistency of its ills. But how initiate the lift? The attack of Lonergan’s published work in economics was no more effective that our own little attack on George Bush’s adviser Mankiw.

“But we are not there yet,”<sup>14</sup> as Lonergan wrote about that shambles more than sixty years ago. Now I would note that the failure of Lonergan’s economics is on a par with the failure of his book *Insight*, and further, the success of both depends on the emergence of a community committed to functional collaboration. Why is this so? That relates to a comprehension of the larger context, which we are avoiding here, but at its simplest it relates to evident advantages of the recycling dynamics of the suggested collaboration.

For starters, however, advertence to the consistency of stupidity and malice in some zone is an entry into a global reorientation of aid. It makes conversion a topic in a realistic and tolerant sense.<sup>15</sup> I would say that the conversions of interest to us here are

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<sup>12</sup>*Method in Theology*, 123.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>14</sup>*For A New Political Economy*, 20. The beginning of a magnificent statement regarding decay, dating from 1942. You might usefully muse over it in relation to his thematic, over twenty years later, of a functional collaboration that would “lift its eyes more and ever more to the more general and more difficult fields of speculation” (*ibid.* ).

<sup>15</sup>A illustration of that realism comes from my classroom us of texts in psychology, education, sociology, etc in philosophy. We adverted to the deficiencies in texts that students

mainly [1] the conversion to generalized empirical method; [2] the conversion to functional specialization. The conversion to functional specialization is the overall drive that in its cycling is to generate the prior conversion: Lonergan is its step-father, but history is its mother. But it is the prior conversion that is made strategically visible by our exercise regarding first year university texts.

The strategy is revealing, profitable, efficient in many ways, something that you may check out in your own case. You are interested in Lonergan's perspective as a life-focus, as giving life. But perhaps you have been limited in that interest to brands of common sense, brands of philosophy and theology. And perhaps that interest has been led, by conventions of Lonergan studies, into various shades of dialogue with other views that are what I might call purely methodological.<sup>16</sup> Lonergan himself was led in such directions, in large and small ways.<sup>17</sup> We shall return in later *Joistings* to the general question of dialogue with other viewpoints and their value, but it seems best to

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were using in other classes, but the students were cautioned to avoid directly challenging teachers in those areas: this was both a tolerance of established truncation and a precaution against failing the course. As Lonergan remarked to me once "give the guy what he wants".

<sup>16</sup>Roughly, the purely methodological can be taken to be philosophical inquiry not mediated by another discipline. It can, alas, have the appearance of such mediation and also it can develop its own layers of sophistication. *Insight* has a few sharp comments on it, e.g., on pages 417[442], 542[565-6]. See also Volume 6 of Lonergan, *Collected Works*, 121,155, on *haute vulgarization*. Theology is unfortunately prone to suffer from the same deficiency of purity, and furthermore their deficiencies are easier to cover in that theologies spring from various claimed, and often elaborate, expressions of origin: Vedas, Old Testaments, etc. One can be content to search from original or transient meanings with seriously adverting to the real context of the dynamics of the cosmos. The word can be made fresh only by acknowledging operatively that it is spoken by the billions of years of history's molecular mouth.

<sup>17</sup>This is a very large topic that involves a reach towards an understanding of the accidents of his life and his *Opera Omnia*. One can realistically and gloomily view his achievement as now merely the interest of a small group: check bookstores, bibliographies etc. Below I mention his failed effort in economics, and the failure of both *Insight* and *Method in Theology*. But one might ask more detailed questions, for instance, what effective influence had his venture into phenomenology or into mathematical logic as represented by *Collected Works* volume 18?

plunge directly into our illustrative exercise by asking, What is the advantage of this particular suggested dialogue, of venturing into a first-year text book in some unfamiliar zone?

The advantages are to be discovered in the adventure, but I would nudge you to take note of the fact that, in taking up such a text, you are tackling a very definite piece of the workings of what Lonergan calls the longer cycle of decline. It puts you right in there, so to speak, in the trenches.<sup>18</sup> Recall now your reading of that section of *Insight* that tried to bring you face to face with decay.<sup>19</sup> There is a way in which its magnificent sweep can carry you along, touch your heart, tune you to the stress in our contemporary lives, yet somehow not connect you to details that cry out for reform.

Here I am asking you to build in a dominant illustration to that previous reading. Build it in at whatever level you can manage. Perhaps you can envisage, through your previous work in emergent probability, the recurrence-schemes that generate such texts, and the statistics of their survival within present structures. But even without this larger perspective a reading of this section of *Insight*, with such a text in mind and hand, gives a lift to that reading, a lift that can give you a thematic lift of the usual student complaints regarding such texts.

How much of a thematic lift? That is up to you as reader with your present background, and here I do not wish to anticipate that result doctrinally. The main achievement is that you arrive at a better appreciation of a particular set of operative contributions to "life unlivable"<sup>20</sup> and that this appreciation leads you to ask, What might be done about it?

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<sup>18</sup>And indeed in the seats of parliament, in the courts of law, etc. I am avoiding here enlarging on the horrific cultural effect of the closed-minded nominalism of standard texts. The horror is to be revealed by the exercises suggested.

<sup>19</sup>I am referring to section 8 of chapter 7 of *Insight*.

<sup>20</sup>*Topics in Education*, 232. The topic was art and its significance for human living. Did these lectures have any effect on the culture and cultivation of aesthetic sensibility?

My problem now is to halt as abruptly as possible. What might be done? That was the question and the message of the until-now failed book *Method in Theology*. What is needed in this decade is some group willing to risk some strategic exercises, such as the suggested one, that would help to turn the corner with a bow to Lonergan and to History. Perhaps you can come up with better suggestions, better strategies? Watch out especially for strategies that [1] push us into generalized empirical method; [2] reveal a vulnerable zone of current decay; [3] push us to thematize where we personally stand; [4] make a little more evident the need for functional collaboration; [5] bubble up into concrete strategies for moving into such collaboration.

In this search I am an available collaborator, but with luck not really needed: I could turn out to be more like some old guy throwing in the ball at the beginning of the game and then tottering off the mound.