

Quodlibet 3**Being Breathless and Late in Talking about Virtue****March 2004****Q3a**

This is my third and final preliminary Quodlibet with which I would wish to set the tone of the drive towards a beginning on functional collaboration. Neither it nor the previous essay, however, should prevent your participation in this reaching, nor should your possible innocence of Lonergan's work. As we go along indeed, we will find that Lonergan is, in a sense, not relevant: what is relevant is noticing the need for a division of work in any area.

In the previous essay I expressed my stand on images and on the control of meaning that developed symbolism can bring. Here I point towards an enlargement, an invasion, of that stand into talk about virtue.¹ My stand here is quite complex, developed over four decades, but I will try to keep the complexity to the footnotes. The minimum that I wish to convey is that the cyclic division of labour is relevant to the task of bringing philosophy and theology into the humbling searchings for the meanings of human activities of present scientists.

As in the previous essay, so here, a few quotations from Lonergan give us a decent lead-in, things to brood on. The first is from the Epilogue of *Insight* (733[755]), already lurking in our title. The second is a sort of damning repeat of that in what I might consider to be the key paragraph of *Method in Theology*, at the center of page 287, in which he brings his stand on his categories to a conclusion (though, as I have regularly noted, he does not include in the list a number 10: functional specialization). The third is a page that I have been referring to for four decades, and in its regard - as a help to your struggle to read it! - I recall an event of the Summer of 1966 that will

¹In earlier essays (SOFDAWAREs 5 and 6) I reflected on Alastair MacIntyre's book *After Virtue* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1981) and promised further reflection on it: here it is.

enlighten you: it is funny and deeply sad, distressing. The event, and the question within it, really do get to the heart of the matter.

I was spending the Summer at Regis College on Bayview Avenue Toronto, where Lonergan was living, in recovery mode after a lung-removal. I was half way through the Oxford doctorate, working away on details of schemes of recurrence etc. Fr. David Tracy came to my room. I had regarded him as a sort of master of Lonergan studies, and in the flow of conversation I expressed delight in the possibility of him throwing light on a problem that was frustrating me. The problem was to reach illustrative precision on what Lonergan meant by “flexible circle of ranges of schemes of recurrence”. Dave looked at me as if I had grown horns.² Your problem now is, how you look at the three quotations from Lonergan, how you move in the reading to taking a self-digestive self-exposing stand.

[a] “But if Catholics have endeavored to establish the synthesis of the objects and the symbiosis of the principles of reason and faith, it also is true that their efforts have been embarrassed continually by the instability of the pronouncements of scientific reason. From the nature of the case the initiative seems permanently in the hands of those who invoked science against religion and, if it mattered little to them that the issue had shifted from physics to Semitic literature, from Semitic literature to biology, from

²I hesitated solemnly before coming to the decision to name Tracy. But part of taking a stand is taking up narrative opposition if it belongs to one’s ‘page 250 *Completion*’. Tracy set an early tone of a Lonerganism which flows in a style of literary and comparative writing. I have had occasion previously to take a naming stand against his counter-position on objectivity: see my “The Core Psychological Present of the Contemporary Theologian”, in *Trinification of the World*, (A *Festschrift* in honour of Frederick Crowe’s 60th birthday), Regis College Press, 1978, 84-96. Tracy did not react. The final note in this essay expresses a wish that we take explicit stands on ongoing efforts to understand and implement Lonergan’s work. For my own part, I am tired of the “silent treatment” of my work. If you think I am quite wrong about the remote genius of Lonergan’s reach, then take your stand. Such a stand is what eventually will be - in the developed use of “The Structure of Dialectic” - a thematically embarrassing narrative self-exposure.

biology to economics, or from economics to depth psychology, the defenders were left in the unenviable position of always arriving on the scene a little breathlessly and a little late”.

[b] “From such a broadened basis one can go on to a developed account of the human good, values, beliefs, to the carriers, elements, functions, realms, and stages of meaning, to the question of God, of religious experience, its expression, its dialectic development”.

[c] “Study of the organism begins from the thing-for-us, from the organism as exhibited to our senses. A first step is a descriptive differentiation of different parts and, since most of the parts are inside, this descriptive preliminary necessitates dissection or anatomy. A second step consists in the accumulation of insights that relate the described parts to organic events, occurrences, operations. By these insights, the parts become known as organs, and the further knowledge, constituted by the insights, is a grasp of intelligibilities that

(1) are immanent in the several parts,

(2) refer each part to what it can do and, under determinable conditions, will do,
and

(3) relate the capacity-for-performance of each part to the capacities-for-performance of the other parts.

So, physiology follows anatomy. A third step is to effect the transition from the thing-for-us to the thing-itself, from insights that grasp described parts as organs to insights that grasp conjugate forms systematizing otherwise coincidental manifolds of chemical and physical processes. By this transition one links physiology with biochemistry and biophysics. To this end there have to be invented appropriate symbolic images of the relevant chemical and physical processes; in these images there have to be grasped by insight the laws of the higher system that account for regularities beyond the range of physical and chemical explanation; for these laws, there has to be constructed the flexible circle of schemes of recurrence on which the organism

functions; finally, this flexible circle of schemes must be coincident with the related set of capacities -for-performance that previously was grasped in sensibly presented organs.

The foregoing three steps of anatomy, physiology, and their transposition to the thing-itself reveal one aspect of the organism as higher system in an underlying manifold of cells, chemical processes, and physical changes. Let us name that aspect of the higher system as integrator. The higher system itself is a set of conjugate forms. As integrator this set is related

(1) to inspected organs as the set of functions grasped by the physiologist in sensible data,

(2) to the physical, chemical and cytological manifold as the conjugates implicitly defined by the correlations that account for additional regularities in the otherwise coincidental manifold, and

(3) to immanent and transient activities of the organism in its environment as the ground of the flexible circle of ranges of schemes of recurrence”

That third quotation is quite a head-full, isn't it? It has dazzled me for decades. Before I go on I must tell you of my most recent dazzling. I have been cherishing the shock of reading the second part of the *Summa Theologica*³ while **bearing it - that quotation - in mind**.⁴ But bearing it in mind not merely in relation to the organic but in

³I find it useful here to link the two parts of the *II Pars* with *Insight* and the “far larger” work mentioned on the first page of its Epilogue. Thomas, in his Prologue to the *Ila Ilae* writes of a “more compendious” way of reflection on virtue when one moves to particulars. It is not the same pointing as Lonergan’s, but it can nudge one to make fruitful parallels. The *Ila Ilae* is a larger work than the *Ia Ilae*. Add the issues raised in the next note.

⁴In various parts of the Cantowers I pointed to a richness in Thomas treatment, in the *III Pars*, of the mystery of the Incarnate Word, quite beyond Lonergan’s sketchings in his Latin works. One could profitably take a *Quaestio* a week for one’s

relation to my humanity, a relation which I expressed regularly by modifying the starting-word: "Self-study of the organism...."⁵

I wish to keep this essay brief, but it is difficult. As well as the *Summa*, there are relevant works of Aristotle which I have before me now, born again in my mind.⁶ Even a brief perusal of them can bring the shock of Lonergan's foundational fantasy regarding their contemporary re-writing. But a focus on one Aristotelian pointer helps to make the key point. Read it as best you can in snail-slow heuristic seriousness.

"It is necessary for the student of these forms of soul first to find a definition of each, expressive of what it is, and then to investigate its derivative properties, &c. But if we are to express what each is, viz. What the thinking power is, or the perceptive, or the nutritive, we must go further back and first give an account of thinking or perceiving; for activities and actions are prior in definition to potentialities. If so, and if, still prior to them, we should reflect on their correlative objects, then for the same reason we must

daily contemplative efforts (see Cantower 21 on the need for kataphatic spirituality). Add the context developed by the control of the metaphysical words. A later Christology should venture into possibilities of the chemical tensions of his psyche, "an *ego* with a message for mankind" (*Insight*, 194), within the full complexity of $f(p_i; c_i; b_k; z_l; u_m; r_n)$. One thus lifts Bethlehem into the orb of Betelgeuse (with diameter 3 times larger than the Earth's sunswing) and moves to a sense of the 13.7-million-year longing of the cosmic background radiation for its oscillations within divine wording. Such a move belongs to the Christian calling named in the next note.

⁵The self-study can mount up to the level of Faith's reach so that "lifted by the imagination of the future we can move beyond the fleshed Christ to have spiral within us our word of the Divine Word" (I translate freely from *De Deo Trino, Pars Systematica*, (Rome, 1964), 255-6). Such a lifting, within an explanatory heuristic world view, would in that future radiate out from the Tower of a later theology to make resonant in the streets the galactic chemistry of the heart-throbbled Christ. A helpful context on this, and on the centuries-generated backwardness of theology, is "Grace: The Final Frontier", the last chapter of *The Redress of Poise*.

⁶See the series of works in the volume mentioned in the next note: writings on sense, memory, sleep, dreams, life, death, respiration....

first determine about them i.e. about food and the objects of perception and thought.”⁷

You have there the usual object to act and act to potency stuff about discovery-procedure, a process that can be linked to the style of distinguishing virtues in the second part of the *Summa*.

But now can you begin to notice the lift all this gets from the multiple shift of Lonergan? I spoke of this with enthusiasm to my colleague Bruce Anderson yesterday: he was off on his weekly escape into wood-carving, so I took sculpting as a handy illustration. You can imagine that you get to know the **what** of sculpting by starting with the object and working back through the activity to defining the potency, the capacity-for-performance. But now, let’s get real. What is the activity? Isn’t it really a very complex set of activities and mediations relating to a complex object? Indeed, doesn’t it throw you into thinking out the flexible circle of ranges of schemes of recurrence involved? And what of the physics of pressures, the chemistry of chisel-tone, the dynamic patterns of dead wood, the rhythms of the psyche? What, then, is the talent, the virtue, of the good sculptor? Do you get some little sense from this of the problem of a future re-thinking and re-writing of *De Anima* and of the *Summa*? Do you glimpse now that page, quoted in [c], as a massive program pointing towards a distant creative integration, for example, of contemporary chemo-psychology into a search for the nature of virtues quite beyond the limp pattering of the community of writers represented by Alastair MacIntyre’s *After Virtue*?

The program is there in *Insight* in that single page, but spelled out in the flawed communication that is chapters 15 and 16 of the book.⁸ How might we get that

⁷Aristotle, *On The Soul*, II, 4, 14-22 (415^a1). I am quoting from volume 1 of *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Princeton University Press, 1984, 660-1.

⁸These are astonishing chapters, quite remote in their meaning. I dealt with them in a feeble manner in Cantowers 15 and 16 by paralleling the two chapters, respectively, with the works of Stephen Gould (especially his great final work: *The Structure of Evolutionary Theory*, Harvard University Press, 2002, pp. 1339) and the life-

program up and crawling? By luck: or by re-cycling the program through the collaboration that would roll the neglected book up and round through dialectic, a dialectic that merges a genuine anti-foundational search for tentative basics common to psychology, chemistry, literature, etc etc.⁹ **THEN**,¹⁰ instead of breathlessness of culture there would be a culture in which “motions belonging to the breath”¹¹ would merge with the tensions and the genuineness of those Tower people who “can go on to a developed account of the human good”¹², an account that tentatively integrates but luminously operates to lift the symphony of history into the chords of a fresh beginning.

Q3b

So many additional points occur to me that might help our beginning. But I had best halt, drawing your attention to the single problem of your taking a stand, taking a stand especially on the nature of personal and historical growth. I have written about personal growth previously and there is no point in repeating the stuff here. But perhaps, regarding historical growth, the above reflections help to get a sense that we

work of Thomas Kuhn. But the chapters are programs for a massive transposition of human inquiry. What I am hinting at here regarding the *Summa*, for instance, is hidden in the single note to chapter 15. And there is much else hidden: I have no doubt that Lonergan had to slide over his grip on a transposed metaphysics of *potentia activa* (see *Verbum*, 121-8) when he wrote of capacity-for-performance.

⁹The manner in which all fields of inquiry slope up through the specialties to share a common dialectic and foundations is discussed in Cantower 8, “Slopes: An Encounter’.

¹⁰Cantower 5, “Metaphysics THEN” deals with the sublation of Zen and western Ken into a praxis perspective that I have called THEN.

¹¹Aristotle, “On Breath”, 482^b1, 14. (*Op. Cit.*, note 7, 767).

¹²*Method in Theology*, 287. I take this final opportunity to draw attention to an integral image which come from a cut-out of the diagram that I call W3 (on page 124 of *A Brief History of Tongue*). One cuts out the 8 rectangular shape and folds it into a round tower, the mental habitat of the creative minority.

are at a beginning, that the alchemical stage of metaphysics could now be drawn to a close?

At all events, these three Quodlibets should give a context for some type of start. But you would certainly get a larger perspective on the start from perusing the eight SOFDAWAREs. Indeed, you might find that those SOFDAWAREs give you a sufficient context to get your own show on the roll. Then you don't need my collaboration at all. Still, it would be good if there was some sense of fermenting pockets of a global turn to implementing Lonergan's fundamental contribution to the emergence of a beautiful and efficient metaphysics.¹³

¹³Obviously I am appealing to you to think out and take a stand about that remote differentiation of consciousness named functional specialization. An honest stand can be that you are going in another direction e.g. using Lonergan's hints about questions, insights, etc to change common sense in some zone. But I would wish you to avoid the self-deception that would shrink and slip Lonergan neatly into the present messy and effete pop-culture of philosophy and theology. By now you certainly have some notion of my view on present Lonerganism. For more sad laughs on the matter and on the manner of my sidelining by various cliques, see note 2 above and note 80 of SOFDAWARE 1. I must repeat: I really would prefer my opponents to take an honest explicit nasty stand about my work instead of just slipping past it.