

*Quodlibet 12**Cantower Demission, Quodlibet Commission*

It seems appropriate to begin this "Quodlibet of Reorientation" by inviting you to read along with me the extract from Pound's "Commission" first used by me in prefacing the book *Music That Is Soundless* 35 years ago.<sup>1</sup> Ezra Pound was never central in my interests, yet there he is, twining into my struggle, with his eccentric view of the twentieth century and of Flaubert, with his turn to economics, with his Canto project, with his interest in Vorticism. So, I read along with myself of 35 years ago, in startling freshness and resonance, that curious mission statement. Join me.

*Go, my songs, to the lonely and the unsatisfied,  
Go also to the nerve-racked, go to the enslaved-by-convention,  
Bear to them my contempt for their oppressors.  
Go a great wave of cool water.  
Bear my contempt of oppressors.*

*Speak against unconscious oppression,  
Speak against the tyranny of the unimaginative,  
Speak against bonds.  
Go to the bourgeoisie who is dying of her ennui.  
Go to the unluckily mated  
Go to the bought wife,  
Go to the woman entailed.*

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<sup>1</sup>Curiously, the book appears as I write, in a new edition titled *Music That Is Soundless. A Fine Way for the Lonely Bud A* (Axial Press, 2005). The original sub-title was *An Introduction to God for the Graduate*, which will remind those who remember the sixties ( and the old joke about remembering the sixties!) of the songs of Paul Simon that I played and sang in those strange days.

*Go to those who have delicate lust,  
 Go to those whose delicate desires are thwarted ,  
 Go like a blight upon the dullness of the world;  
 Go with your edge against this,  
 Strengthen the subtle cords,  
 Bring confidence upon the algae and the tentacles of the soul.*

*Go in a friendly manner,  
 Go with an open speech,  
 Be eager to find new evils and new good,  
 Be against all forms of oppression.  
 Go to those who are thickening with middle years,  
 To those who have lost their interest.*

*Go out and defy opinion,  
 Go out against this vegetable bondage of the blood,  
 Be against all sorts of mortmain.<sup>2</sup>*

The previous *Quodlibet* ending my formal written effort of collaboration in opening up the topic “Structure of Dialectic”. The topic gave rise to the name SOFDAWARE which was the title of the first 8 essays in the series, and these were followed by the present series of essays, the *Quodlibets*. With little interruption, it has been a seven-month climb for me, and it amused me to think that, yes, I had specialized: I had studied and written about a single page of Lonergan’s work for seven months.

What next? Obviously the collaborations that the writing generated, and other collaborations initiated before and since, continue. But the present *Quodlibet* was

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<sup>2</sup>An extract from “Commission” by Ezra Pound, *Selected Poems*, London, 1959, 96-7.

intended to be the result of prolonged musing about the “What next?” question, and I fancied some weeks ago that it would require months of pausing, sifting, searching among known and unknown options. But now, as I enter October 2004, I seem to have gathered enough perspective to make my move into, well, into the last run-up and run-out of *Quodlibets*.

You would not be reading this if you did not, in your own way and in your own life, share my concern. And it is the question of sharing that is the issue here. A previous sketching of this *Quodlibet* stretched it into perhaps 50 pages, but now it seems best to be a brief as possible. What was my problem of discernment? No need for elaboration: in the first SOFDAWARE I gave the reasons for cutting off the *Cantower* project: basically, a response to requests to collaborate in implementing functional specialization. In *Quodlibet 3*, I noted the enlarged perspective that resulted from that switch of concern: a fuller appreciation of the foundational task as it varies through the ages and in varieties of circumstances. Some of you will profit, in your own circumstances, from a glimpse of that shift. It adds to my foundational stand, and since foundations are meant to be circulated, even spin out beyond the Tower of Cultural Collaboration to common sense, this is not just addressed to foundational persons.

Curiously, I have just now already expressed the shift: foundations are **meant to circulate**. In a later stage of meaning that circulation will have much higher probabilities - I do not wish to get technical here in that matter - but the present circumstances seem to give the proverbial snowball’s chances. Witness the foundations expressed by Lonergan for Economics, for empirical method, for theology. Of course, here I seem to be in a definite minority. Perhaps it helps to put my claim in a particular way: I do not think that many people have read seriously page 250 of *Method*; I do not think that many people have read seriously page 464[489] of *Insight*. The nineteen previous essays are a testament to what I mean by seriously reading - but note

especially it means reading **forward**<sup>3</sup>- page 250 of *Method*. What might it mean to read seriously page 464[489] of *Insight*? Well, we'll have a shot at that starting with the next *Quodlibet*. But no harm in recalling its drive here: it's the "study of the organism" page, which I regularly twist to a discomfoting "self-study of the organism".

Very deliberately I pushed my key shift of perspective into the previous footnote: if it took me till now to get that perspective, you can surely suspect that it is not communicated in such a brief doctrinal footnote. Might you suspect, for instance, that it has not the same meaning as when I wrote in 1969 of *Praxisweltanschauung*? One can talk of a shift to *Praxis* like one can talk of the shift from Beethoven's seventh to his eighth symphony, but what of appreciating it: Ludwig said that the eighth was a better symphony, but what did he mean? Perhaps he meant that the (deaf) older Beethoven was a better listener?

I am raising here a huge question that I believe is a central schizothymically-battered question of the schizothymic axial period. My lengthy ramblings about that single page 250 was a stand against that madness. And my moving into a like rambling in page 464[489] continues that stand. Both pages are to take on meaning from the next few centuries and thus challenge axial schizothymia in their different ways. What do I now mean by *Forward*, by *implementation*, by *Praxis*? These words name a heuristic reach of fantasy, a *per se* task of the global Elders: if it is potent, then its meaning is to be found in the story that is to follow, circulated forwarded by operative fantasy.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>See the following note. I am writing here of a massive shift of *ethos*, a heuristics of being that bends one's bone's towards global becoming, a remembering that is always remembering of the future. The meaning lurks in the neglected word "implementation" of Lonergan's definition of metaphysics. We will recognize its present pitiful absence when we have gone some way towards its presence.

<sup>4</sup>I have been trying to give this notion fresh precision throughout these *Quodlibets* and hope that we might move significantly forward from *Quodlibet* 14 on, but perhaps it would help to pose an apparently different question: what do I mean by a circle? You could settle for the evident meaning pointed to in the first chapter of *Insight*, but operative fantasy might carry you through Euclid's *Elements* and beyond. "A geometer understands the whole of Euclid ....he's got

My taking a stand on slow-growing meaning seems now, indeed, to be my central issue. In the Epilogue to the new edition of *Music That Is Soundless* I wrote of a recent week that I spent memorizing and intussusception 8 lines of a Hopkins poem. What does it mean to neuro- molecularize that verbal reach? What does it mean to molecularize in a global culture of inquiry the directives of page 464[489] of *Insight*? Well, at least I can point and popularize.

There: I've thrown in a key problem word, **popularize**: but what does it, might it, mean? That is a question for another day, other *Quodlibets*.<sup>5</sup> I will only say that in its full positive sense it presses towards a solution to the problem presented in the first section of chapter 17 of *Insight*: the making present of mystery, humility, effective hope.

But at least I hope to effect some small popularization of patient self-respecting detail-cherishing, such as was recommended in the first paragraph of the first chapter of *Insight*.<sup>6</sup> In his Editor's Preface to *Macroeconomics Dynamics: An Essay in Circulation Analysis* Charles Hefling wrote of Lonergan. in his final years, writing "in a spare and

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the whole thing in his intellectual paws, so to speak" (*Phenomenology and Logic*, 357). When will you or I have *Praxis* in our intellectual paws?

<sup>5</sup>"Quantumelectrodynamics, Pedagogy, Popularization" is the title of Cantower 54, scheduled for September 2006. It is a topic that cannot be dismissed, indeed it seems to me now to be at the center of our present axial troubles. We will get to it during the next years. In the conclusion of Cantower 33 I raised the larger, related, question of **symbolizations** that would mediate a redemption of communication: that topic was to have been a preoccupation of the Cantowers of 2008. (The over-all title of those Cantowers, 66-81, was given as "Explanatory Heuristic Fantasy and the General Logic of Expression".) Might we get to it sooner, sketchily, doctrinally? But it has been with us all along, in the disturbing presence of my incomplete list of metaphysical words, W0, W1, W2, W3, W4, W5.

<sup>6</sup>Cantowers 27-31, dealing with the first five chapters of *Insight*, contain illustrations of this patient and detailed approach. This is all, of course, connected to the problem of the previous note and the orientation expressed in the text above. It is to be part of the turn-around of the *Quodlibets* to follow. See the beginnings of section 2, *Quodlibet* 14.

lapidary style,"<sup>7</sup> revising earlier expression, "nearly always the revised text is shorter."<sup>8</sup> I, on the contrary, am bent on making my expression longer. Not that I am comparing myself to Lonergan: my discipleship of 47 years has made me an increasingly astonished learner, as you will find if you come to join me in the following *Quodlibets*. Those last years of Lonergan were dedicated primarily to what I might call a primary expression of his economic perspective.<sup>9</sup> I am now almost at the same age, 73, as he was when I assisted him in focusing on that first teaching of economics in the spring of 1978. It is some years since I resolved not to be thus caught up in what in retrospect seems a waste of Elderhood; but a positive side of the resolution was towards the avoidance of summary presentation.

Yet there were still options, which I can now perhaps identify with the two finalities of the foundational quest. There is a vertical finality associable with the personal quest; there is the horizontal finality associable with the bold-faced words above, **meant to circulate**. Eventually the foundational community will span the 90° angle of the diagram of those two finalities. But the present community of foundational searchers is quite small, where by that type of searcher I mean one that seeks The Dark Tower, the struggling incarnation of a fuller coherent up-to-date explanatory metaphysics.<sup>10</sup> Here again I think of Lonergan and indeed Aquinas. Thomas did not

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<sup>7</sup>xix.

<sup>8</sup>xv.

<sup>9</sup>In my Introduction to *For A New Political Economy* I indicated how he maintained, throughout this effort, a dialectic interest.

<sup>10</sup>Cantower 4 ends: "*Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came*". You may recall how that essay placed the search in a feminist and 'molecular' context with the help of the work of Candace Pert. It is as well, in this context of a sort of typology of foundations persons, to return to that old point of "taking a stand" - the high "turning" point of *Method in Theology*, the self-typifying of the end of page 250. At one stage in his late conversations Lonergan talked about dynotypes - in relation, if I remember rightly to the work of Progoff. It connects with sniffing out, or "letting be", of the reach in destiny of one's personal molecules. My own molecular drive has

live in a culture of **meant circulation**. If he had, his reach might not have been buried under the dark progress of seven axial centuries. He battled on amazingly through his *Summa*, providentially quitting before he got bogged down in a cosmology that just wasn't up to bearing a coherent eschatology. Lonergan lived in a century which required a mix of naive and obscene circulation. Going reluctantly to Rome took the edge of his climb, but it led him to his thematic of **meant circulation**, and the blunting led to a modestly descriptive and confusing expression of that **meant circulation**. Still, that modest expression grounds the possibility of bringing the edge back into the climb for those who take either Lonergan or the circulation seriously. It was an edge, moreover, the relevance of which to global progress he never doubted, nor do I, nor did Aquinas: the relevance of serious understanding, but now the call of all those who reflect culturally, to embrace thus the universe.

Still, there is the balance of the two finalities according to the circumstances and needs of the times. **Meant circulation** was not an option as a preoccupation for Aquinas as it is for us, for me now. Might we avoid, with Lonergan, repeating the brutal failure of theology and philosophy in the past seven centuries? My small contribution to that avoidance is the shift away from a more private and personal climb towards a communal stirring of the axial treacle towards a vortex twist, a slow beginning of a spiral round and up the Tower. Hence my title and my reorientation.

The *Cantowers* are still ahead of schedule - Cantower 41 was dated August 2005 - so their continuation deserved revisiting. But eventually the move away from them

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been - but so slowly identified - towards incarnating an explanatory heuristic. It leads to, and leaves one living, a rather crazy life, made all the crazier through the present cultural assumptions about growth and communication. That 4<sup>th</sup> Cantower is one of my better efforts to raise the question for others. To answer it with a "no way!" can be solidly authentic. But to prevent it bubbling forward in others: that is to align oneself with the cold heart of axial decay. It was one of the horrors of my recent walks in Dublin, recalled in *Quodlibet* 8, to sense it in the beingstalk of street and parent.

remains my option, although qualified in a way noted occasionally here.<sup>11</sup> The *Quodlibets*? They remain my option, but laced into the mission, commission, with a meaning of commission that ranges from the stand of Pound to the stand of Lonergan regarding collaboration as an *Imago Trinitatis*.<sup>12</sup> That lacing depends on some of you joining the broad and tolerant task of promoting the move forward. There is the massive task of beginning the circulation by sweating one's mind into some functional specialization: sweatiest, if one opts for the cultivation of the quite novel specialist orientations towards the future. But there are the minor tasks of simply promoting here and there in one's neighborhood some sense of the needs to be met in economics, philosophy, theology, culture, some beginnings of meeting them.

There is the possibility of the Cantower project begin continued by others, and that continuation need not be as solitary as it sadly has been. There may be some reader, or reader's friend, with a bent towards a thesis on tadpole development<sup>13</sup> or a text on economics for grade 12,<sup>14</sup> with a urge to get beyond the mental death of "the

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<sup>11</sup>Note 5 above gives one definite indication. How I hope to sublimate the core drive of the Cantower Project emerges as we struggle forward. And, of course, the sublation depends on community, as note 13 implies. Is there someone "out there" up to tackling seriously genetic method for the geranium or the giraffe?

<sup>12</sup>The key reference here is his *De DeoTrino II. Pars Systematica* (Gregorian Press, Rome, 1964), especially *Quaestio XXIX* and *Assertum XVIII*.

<sup>13</sup>I am, of course, looking for someone who would save me tackling later (scheduled for January 2007) Cantower 58, "Tadpoles, Tell Us Telling Tales".

<sup>14</sup>You may recall, from *Quodlibet* 8, my moment of frustration in finding, in a Dublin book store, a grade 12 text for economics that was twisting teenaged minds towards accepting the current stupidities of advanced economics.



usual”<sup>15</sup> or to undermine that deadly conventions of classrooms; whatever.<sup>16</sup> Then let’s see what we can do. Already I have a collaborator, Alessandra Drage, willing to plunge with me into page 464[489] in an adventure beginning in the next *Quodlibet*. But there are all sorts of other options. Join me, join together, in collaborative and dangerous conversation. “Be against all sorts of mortmain”.

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<sup>15</sup>I talked of “the usual” in the conclusion of chapter five of *Lack in the Beingstalk*. It symbolizes the massive ontogenetic and phylogenetic psychic commitment of our times. It is the existential horror touched on at the end of footnote 10 above, at the end of Proust’s great book.

<sup>16</sup>“A Reform of Classroom Performance” is the title of section 5 (pp. 18-50) of Cantower 6. The essay points to the double strategy of reform in any area.