

SURF 1

Meanings and Directions of *SURF*

I would note that this final series comes at the end of my *Cantower* effort, the series of 117 essays that was promised on April 1st 2002, an essay per month until December 2011. That series was completed early under the title *Field Nocturnes CanTower*, a shift of title explained elsewhere,¹ leaving me three years to well, to surf.

SURF has many odd meanings that are to emerge and be enriched by, I hope, a community effort to implement the slogan that eventually became a title for the Cantower series, "Roun Doll, Home James." An initial meaning of *SURF* echoes that: *Sally Up Round Freely*. One had best think of this in terms of the image of the Tower of Able that I have been promoting for some time. But here I would note a fresh, if disturbing, bent in my writing. I do not have time to go back to a beginning, an introduction of topics and symbols. The *Cantower* series began with the question, from Eric Voegelin, "Where does the Beginning Begin?" This new beginning begins where I left off at FNC 117, with the question of following through on Lonergan's suggestion about transposing the subtleties of interpretationology in *Insight* chapter 17 into a functional context. It is, if you like, a postgraduate ramble. The BA - Barely Adequate - graduates are to emerge slowly, under the pressure of Tower construction, a pressure that is a large topic in itself.²

We can move towards an initial meaning of *Sally Up Round Freely* without too much strain. *Sally*: there is the Latin for leaping. Molecular leaps of insight are involved, but here I might as well point out the largest difficulty: that the core leaping is into an explanatory world, radically different from a world of description, however rich. *Up*: the tower enterprize is dynamically constructed to be an upward genesis and

¹See, for example, *Field Nocturne CanTower 44*, "The Fourth Stage of Meaning"

²A context of that developed topic is given in the Web book *Method in Theology: Revisions and Implementations*, with its sequel *Lonergan's Standard Model of Effective Global Inquiry*.

maintenance of meaning. **Round:** part of that maintenance pivots on the cyclic structure of a functional collaboration. **Freely:** the tower community is to be massively and luminously free. Two connections help here: There is the image on page 48 of *Method in Theology*, with *liberty* at a bottom corner. It is the core of the seven million year venture that is humanity. And there is the pointing towards the “Reversal of the Longer Cycle” at the section of *Insight* that has that title, which I quote now with a possibility of you reading it freshly. “In the first place, there is such a thing as progress, and its principle is liberty. There is progress, because practical intelligence grasps ideas in data, guides activity but the ideas, and reaches fuller and more accurate ideas through the situations produced by the activity.”³ You may now read on there, thinking of the collaborative tower in which the characteristics of cosmopolis are to be found. But there are so many shades of *freely* to be ingested, one of which might startle you. It is the freedom by which one accepts the position named in *Insight*:⁴ one leaps freely to adopt that position in the hope of further leaps in self-luminosity. The adopting of the position is not a logical persuasion but a mood swing.

Of the many other meanings to the name **SURF** I would like to select here the major mood swing, one that is fresh in me this past week. I had often written before about the incompleteness of the description of the position in *Insight*, and the need for a complex axiomatics of it. At times I emphasized, indeed, the need for axioms of incompleteness. But now it seems to me that there is a startling fundamental axiom of incompleteness regarding finite mind, an axiom that reaches into the everlasting. That fundamental axiom, and its expansions and extensions, is to belong to a series of open axiom systems that may be more than genetic, but there is a common title for their orientation: *Seeking an Understanding of the Reach of Finitude*. Yes, **SURF**. The

³*Insight*, 259. I now break my tradition of referring to both editions. The reference is to the 1988 University of Toronto edition.

⁴*Insight*, 423.

dynamic of that orientation is the old thesis of Aquinas, that no finite mind can comprehend the divinity. Is there a sense, then, in which everlasting life is a matter of an endlessly and surprising surfing the ocean of infinite mystery?

You may well be tilted to say, yes, there is: in a mood-swing that is descriptively positional, echoing the mood of Teresa of Liseaux⁵ or of a *minne* mystic.⁶ But the question of luminous self-understanding, of protopossession,⁷ is a question to be raised in the Tower: “have I sallied up and round to cherish that question within the layered mediation of *theoria* that gives it precision?” A question way too difficult for this first surfing. A question that, certainly, presupposes that one has a graduate grip on the matter, where the matter is the infinities of dispersedness that is matter, prime matter, energy, called into eternal infolding.

I have paused briefly over two meanings of *SURF* and there are many others. But the difficulty just mentioned leads me to comment on a meaning that is the centre of the present axial crisis of humanity: the neuromolecular stability of general bias.⁸ There is no problem in conjuring up surf names for this deep and all-too-human ill: so one may muse over the phrase, *Sensibility's Upgrading its Relatings to Forms*. But how are we

⁵I am thinking of the remark of Teresa to Mother Agnes of Jesus (her eldest sister, Pauline), about Mother Agnes' death: “God will sip you up like a drop of dew” (*St. Teresa of Liseaux: Her Last Conversations*, translated from the original manuscripts by John Clarke O.C.D., ICS Publications, Washington D.C., 1977, 37). Legitimate metaphor, but so different from the vision of the ocean of being to be reached by following up Thomas.

⁶I think here of the writings of that strange 13th century Beguine mystic, Hadewijch of Antwerp on the topic of *minne* (love). “O powerful, wonderful minne, / You who can conquer all with wonder! / Conquer me, so that I can conquer you, / In your unconquered power.” See a fuller treatment of this in *Prehumous* 7, which deals with foundational prayer and its relation to the mystical tradition, one of five essays (*Prehumous* 4-8) on the topic of foundational prayer..

⁷A Context here is *Cantower 9*, “Position, Poisition, Proto-Possession”, where I was struggling, as I still am, with the meaning of proto-possession.

⁸I discussed the issue of an axial super-ego in *Field Nocturne 2*: “Lonergan's Obscurest Challenge to His Followers”.

to bring the musing into an operative self- and communal- luminosity? That HOW is the question that haunted Lonergan's consciousness over the years between 1953 and 1965: the characteristics of Cosmopolis were sketched, but what might Cosmopolis be? Lonergan's musing went forward tortuously through those years, mediated by his graceful grip on and by logics, sciences, humanities, till he Sallied Up to the Round whose Form is to be a global cyclic collaboration.

We are back at the primary identification of SURF. Might we, together, give it a stumbling whirl? SURF 2 is already written and represents such a stumbling whirl on the part of Ivo Coelho, with my follow-up of comments that should lead to further collaborative whirling. And that is what this final series is about. I might halt there for the present, hoping that my appeal is not effete but effective in the seed of a global sense. But it seems appropriate to connect this final effort with the effort of the Cantower series which was halted at Cantower 41 a few years ago in favour of a possible collaboration, one that failed, and recently was continued with the blunt challenge of *Cantower 42*, "The Dismal Failure of Lonergan Studies." It seems fitting to conclude this new effort with a repetition of that blunt challenge.

Field Nocturnes CanTower 42

The Dismal Failure of Lonergan Studies

I picked this title for my short essay in order to attract attention! I could well have called it, "For a New Political Theology," nudged by the number 42 to recall that powerful neglected Lonergan essay of 1942, "For A New Political Economy". Obviously, I have your attention for these few lines, so please stay with me for the three pages. Don't let the Series title, abbreviated below as **FNC**, bother you. But I hope that the words, *Dismal Failure*, as a particular title, got to you somehow: annoyance, curiosity, sadness, amusement.

If I am to be brief I cannot venture into the dismal failure here. From the point of view of broader culture, Lonergan is just not with it. And, to my mind and from my

position, one central reason is that Lonergan's disciples are not "with Lonergan" in his final brilliant tuning into crises of our times, collaboration and elderhood: Richard Branson has it right, and *Wikinomics*.⁹

For some years now, indeed for over 40 years, I have tried unsuccessfully to draw attention to Lonergan as foster-father of a collaborative movement of which history is to be mother: a movement of global collaboration. My colleagues manage to ignore that pressure, from history, from Lonergan, from Fred Crowe, from me, by carrying on in old isolated ineffective ways of paper writing and conference gatherings. They bring to mind Lonergan's conversational remarks in Dublin, Easter 1961, about "big frogs in little ponds". He was talking about post-Tridentine theology but his summary comment is discomfortingly suited to present Lonerganism.

Functional collaboration was and is his way out. I cannot argue this here: my website contains sufficient variations on the theme.¹⁰ It took him a dozen years to figure out that structure as solving the problem of cosmopolis identified in *Insight*. Surely, if we respect the man and his ideas, that final great idea deserves respect, even implementation? "Is my proposal utopian? It asks merely for creativity, for an interdisciplinary theory that at first will be denounced as absurd, then will be admitted to be true but obvious and insignificant, and finally be regarded as so important that its adversaries will claim that they themselves discovered it."¹¹ Lonergan's senior disciples do not have the courage to denounce the functional suggestion as absurd, but they do so equivalently by treating functionality as merely a sort of simple filing system for

⁹See the internet for Richard Branson's Elders project beginning in 2007. The other reference above is to *Wikinomics. How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything*, by Don Tapscott and Anthony D. Williams, Portfolio (a branch of Penguin), 2006.

¹⁰A convenient start is my Website book of 2007, *Method in Theology. Revisions and Implementations*. The website is www.philipmcsane.ca.

¹¹The Conclusion to "Healing and Creating in History," an essay available both in *A Third Collection* and in volume 15 of *Collected Works*.

their old-style writings and talkings. It is not a filing system, nor is it simple: it points to a massive global geohistorical anti-foundational postmodernism that promises to meet the issues of the new millennium and the next millennia in a humble human fashion. But it demands the serious thinking that would lift us into historic sympathy with the Word, The Practical Theory, of God.¹² It thus demands differentiations of consciousness quite beyond present Lonergan students.

At 77 I wonder, Might we make a start in my lifetime? But what has this to do with this essay, this series? There is already on my website an essay in the series, *FNC 44*, that locates the new series in the context of the old *Cantower* series halted after 41 essays - in hopes of a suggested collaboration that failed - and in the wake of another series of 41 essays dealing with the adequate reading of that single paragraph of *Insight* on the study of the organism¹³ - and I note that the organism in question can be anything from the sunflower to the flowering of the Mystical Organism, God's Wordplan, a flowering that is to be Sonflowered in the Eschaton. In *FNC 44* I anticipated that I would move forward, in 2008-2011, from these two series to the present series of 76 essays. I hurried that series of 76 essays to a conclusion, rounded off by a strategy described in *FNC 43*: the million-word project of 117 *Cantowers* is now complete. I rushed to complete the series because of new possibilities of collaboration. Such a possibility is the November 1st 2008 weekend meeting at Concordia University, and July 6 - 10, 2009, will witness a fresh beginning in St. Mary's University, Halifax, Canada, where the topic is "Global Functional Collaboration". The swift ending of the series, then, was related to freeing myself for collaboration.

The collaboration is to be omnidisciplinary in its global networking. Karl Rahner

¹²I write of the heart of this seriousness in Part Three, chapter one, of Pierrot Lambert and Philip McShane, *Bernard Lonergan: His Life and Leading Ideas*. The work is as yet incomplete, but will appear in English and French in 2009, and later, I would hope, in other languages. A fairly complete draft of my own part, however, is available on request.

¹³*Insight* 464[489]. The new series is titled "Field Nocturnes".

was astute in noting unambiguously, from his reading of Lonergan's 1969 essay, that "Lonergan's theological methodology seems to me to be so generic that it actually suits every science."¹⁴ Such diverse fields as economics, linguistics, and musicology have within them the battered reach of history for that functional collaboration and functional intertwining.¹⁵

I restrict myself in this essay to three pages and to a single **advocacy**.¹⁶ Please pause over my suggestion of **dismal failure** and brood over the non-attention to functional specialization in the past forty years. Have you suggestions, or the time and energy for collaboration? I think of pushing forward with a final series, but I am tired of talking to myself. I appeal now to different generations, and different levels of competence. I have invited retirees to come alive, answering the Beatle's question "Will they be needing me, will they be feeding me, when I'm sixty four?"¹⁷ I invite commonsense folk to venture forwards in more modest ways.¹⁸ And then there are the battered people, doing theses or beginning a teaching career, both types suffering the

¹⁴Rahner is responding to the version of chapter 5 of *Method* published in the 1969 *Gregorianum*. "Die theologische Methodologie Lonergan's scheint mir so generisch zu sein, dass sie eigentlich auf jede Wissenschaft passt", Karl Rahner, "Kritische Bemerkungen zu B.J.F.Lonergan's Aufsatz: 'Functional Specialties in Theology'", *Gregorianum* 51(1971), 537.

¹⁵I have touched on this need in economics: chapter 5 of *Economics for Everyone*, and chapter 3 of *A Brief History of Tongue*, both from Axial Publishing in recent years. Musicology (now chapter two of *The Shaping of the Foundations*, available on the website) was my first venture, the year of the publication of Lonergan's *Gregorianum* article: 1969. The functional intertwining is a more complex matter, to be dealt with as we SURF along.

¹⁶There is the larger **advocacy**. "By **advocating** a distinct functional specialty named dialectic"(*Method*, 153, note 1), at home in page 250 of *Method*, within the cycle of specialties.

¹⁷My essay, "The Importance of Rescuing *Insight*" in *The Importance of Insight: Essays in Honour of Michael Vertin*, edited by John J.Liptay and David S.Liptay, University of Toronto Press, 2007, is on the topic.

¹⁸The invitation is best expressed in the series of 13 essays *Eldorede* - an Elder's plain speaking from my time in Korea and Australia in 2007 - now neatly identified as **FNC 101**.

subtle offer of mental death: you must play the horrid game. But might we not all, in our own way, do something about the dismal failure?