

## “Topics in Education”

### Genuine Democracy

Topics means (from the Greek) places, situations, and here I take it to mean the situation of persons meeting. A person, indeed, is a situation. I was confronted with a situation this week: a young man bewildered by his grade 12 text on Calculus. I spent two great hours in, literally, that situation: where, after all, is the activity of an efficient cause? The text was the usual nominalist and conceptualist concoction: we broke it open with a few illustrative puzzlings of the situation, so that the situation became alive with delight and wonder. Then I led the situation towards intussuscepting Terry Quinn’s pointers to the two fundamental theorems of the calculus. (“The Calculus Campaign,” *Journal of Macrodynamic Analysis*, vol. 2 (2002)).

Now you may ask what this has to do with democracy? Should we wander back to the Indo-European meaning and ethos of *damos*? No, we, in this seminar and on this blog, are focused on changing the situations that are dulled by top-down planning in economics, in everything. The dulling begins in kindergartens and the early grades of school. So, eventually, the emergent adults are led by the knows who don’t really know, they are led to wait for governments to create jobs, they are led to inflict dead texts in schools and universities.

Might we, might you, change the situations that are school fodder, teachers and children?

Do I exaggerate? Take a very serious look at textbooks at the mid-levels of our schools. Our bogus democracies start there.

My title should remind Lonergan students of the tenth volume in his *Collected Works*, *Topics in Education*: but we are not interested in reading it at present. You note that I have given the ‘topics’ a twist that tunes it to what is for me a key point of the final chapter of *Method*, on the eighth specialty of communications: homing in on ‘situation(s)’ as it occurs three time on page 358 of that book, as it occurs in our lives. If we wish for an emergence of real democracy in this next millennium, then we must meet the dulled situations all around: perhaps even the dulled situation in the mirror.

How, ultimately, are we to change, say, the mad situation that is a hedge fund manager or an ISIS warrior? We have to stop killing the delight in the child’s eyes and bones, so that the teenager does not march into madness.

My ramble here relates to the difficult task of bringing the doctrine of COPON (see Cantower 41, “Functional Policy”, section 4) from its remote meaning of the sixth specialty to a street-meaning, even a mirror meaning. How dull are you in that morning meeting? Or are you, perhaps, the stuff of future democracy?