

## Field Nocturne 18

### Re-Cycling Effectively Forward

I would be quite surprised, and also quite pleased, if you took the challenge of the previous essay seriously, even to the extent of pausing for a week or year within the exercises involved. Perhaps you resolve now to give it a week or a year in the future: well, I suppose that would be something, but a frail thing till it is done. Notice - is it not obvious? no, perhaps not - that I am talking to you here now. The same old business of being shabbily on page 250 of *Method in Theology*, facing up and in to each other in and with a disturbing honesty, in and with history.

Let me shift out of that disturbance to the usual happy academic detachment of observer status. Then I might talk of statistical distributions, and think of success in this in terms of the Poisson distribution. I recall now meeting that distribution for the first time in 1954 or 1955, in connection with deaths in the German army from mule kicks. So, here, we might think of one or two out of a thousand readers being odd enough to close themselves into, open themselves out to, the amoeba's invitation and mine. No normal law operative here! But might we now fantasize about such effectiveness? You must surely admit that it would need some cunning shift in communication, a jump to a "specialized auxiliary ever ready to offset every interference with intellect's"<sup>1</sup> effort to brighten the global future. There's a tall cosmopolitan order! But I suspect that you already know, at least vaguely, what I am talking about and where I am pointing.

So, let us take this from another angle. What was I doing when I tackled the text, **EssCelBio**, on the cell? Does it surprise you to be invited to think of it as research, and that in a functional sense?

Now we need here to be together in the realm of fantasy, and I would emphasize that it is very hard work, like the effort of serious and creative inventing. Suppose us to be in a future century, when functional collaboration is a fairly established pattern of

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<sup>1</sup>*Insight*, 726[747].

global caring. Then there would be a familiar international multidisciplinary cycle of operations, a visible multitude of self-correcting progressors in the care of human progress. Does your molecular minding stretch to a visioning?

At that stage of maturing in luminosity, of course, such texts as **EssCellBio** would be souvenirs of past muddlings, but let us muddle our fantasy by imaging that the collaboration I talk of as a future state was, is, now, magically, in place. Then I would be one of perhaps many picking out such texts to see what we were doing to save Grace and Dick and Harriet. I would be, in my accepted role of researcher, delving into the recent past of educational efforts. I would, as all researchers would, be searching for anomalies, features of human effort that did not fit into the Standard Model of global progress. And, be it noted seriously if fancifully, we would be up to scratch in that Standard Model. The absence of fit would be either positive or negative: glorious twists of creativity that should be lifted discerningly into the model, or pieces of folly that needed to be removed with a parallel discernment. So, in the present illustration, I find this text **EssCelBio** in use in my village, my local academy. As a member of the Tower of Able, able to care effectively, I am living among others, as I emphasized, in the viewpoint of the best recent Standard Model, and I sniff out the flaws in the book. I do not aim at coherence, integration. It is sufficient if I bring the flaws scatteredly to the attention of my colleagues, the second team, the interpreters, who lift these flaws into coherence, first with restricted focus, then into broader realms. How broad? They do the best they can in this cycle, within their grip of, and being gripped by, UV +GS: and it is thus that they speak forward into the community of historians, This is the meaning of this texts, these authors. The context of their interpretation makes the flaws stand out like Cromwell's warts.

The text has, of course, only a short history: still, it is part of a longer story of disorientation, and that story has already been built out and up into the obscure and remote, but shared, perspective of the community of historians. Very possibly, that Tower community is right on in its view of the progress or decline that is to be

associated with the text and its tradition. Still, there is a further community, a community of elders, tuned to the total concrete in a life of (discernment)<sup>3</sup>.<sup>2</sup> We are assuming, do not forget, that we are in a later century. The tasks of *Assembly*, *Completion* etc etc have long since reached remote heights of *Selection* which, paradoxically, can reach round the cycle functionally to the buy-ways and hi-ways of humanity.

Sometimes, for example, *Classification*, a richly developed explanatory business, will point up facets of opposition “which have other grounds”<sup>3</sup> than positional opposition: such facets are not to be lost even if omitted in foundational semi-invariants, but cycled forward by such conversations as  $C_{46}$  or  $C_{47}$  or  $C_{48}$  or even  $C_{49}$ .<sup>4</sup> Nor is there a question of infallibility: what is cycled forward, recycles through another community of researchers. But, back to the strict cyclic round, which is at this stage  $C_{45}$ .<sup>5</sup> What is handed on by the dialecticians to the foundational community? A refinement within the rich accepted context of the Standard Model. But is it always within? No more than in any other science: there are paradigm shifts. So, for instance, in this same area of biological education a researcher may find shocking news, a shocking new twist on humanity’s loneliness, and it will find its discomfoting way round the cycle of incline.

Whether the lift be a minor amoeboid correction to local teaching practice or a

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<sup>2</sup>I introduced this complex notion of discernment at the end of chapter 1 of *The Redress of Poise*. It is a particularization of Lonergan’s reflection on the three orders of consciousness which he has in the unpublished [and unfinished, though completely sketched in scribbles] first chapter on Method, written in Spring of 1965 (The incomplete chapter and the pages of its sketch are in the Lonergan Archives in what I marked in the early 1970s as Batch V.7 : it still retains that title but is now more formally catalogued. It is the famous “discovery file” of the functional specialities).

<sup>3</sup>*Method in Theology*, 250.

<sup>4</sup>The diagram of the matrix of collaboration available is available on page 108 of *A Brief History of Tongue*.

<sup>5</sup>The strict flow of collaboration involves conversations of the type  $C_{i,i+1}$ ;  $C_9$  being  $C_1$ .

whale of a global paradigm shift, the foundational community have now a new twist on fantasy and on implementation.

And here is where present fantasy is extraordinarily weak. Can you, might you, imagine, my identification of weakness in a particular text, lifted into the context of other such texts, placed in the story of Grace effectively, discerningly turned towards the future, so that the remote policy generated by the members of the sixth specialty would breed a fresh twist on the genetic pragmatics of care that is cared for by the seventh specialty group, and then breed a fresh lift towards the envisaging by the Communication specialists of a new luminosity of, among many other zones of progress, the teaching of academic and kindergarten biology, with new texts and techniques unimaginable at present.. Can you, might you? I think not. Such a task of local fantasy and campus implementation is to be a collaborative achievement of these next generations.

I have been brief and compendious here, not only not repeating myself but visioning here and now better than ever before, but perhaps in a manner lost in the brevity. I recall walking with Lonergan after a lecture on the good in Dublin in 1971: "that was better than chapter 2 of *Method in Theology*", he said. I had not noticed.