

Joistings 22
Reviewing Mathews' Lonergan's Quest, and Ours.

This is not at all a review of Mathews' mighty work. Certainly I can give a brief personal reaction to it which could be helpful in your reading of it, your benefitting from it. To do that I think it best to lead you first to Bill's last sentence. "As, slowly, our attunement to it [the vision quest] grows, it leaves us, progressively, with a sense of a startling strange and irreducibly mysterious dimension to the desire at the heart of the human, the desire that quests and authors."¹ Bill and I grew up in this attunement over decades, but I can claim an earlier start. It is now fifty years since I began reading Lonergan, with *Insight* coming a year later, and I have stayed with it, progressively finding it increasingly startlingly strange and mysterious. Even this week, as I finally broke through in the central problem of quantum mechanics, which I have grappled with since 1956², I had to conclude that Lonergan's efforts in *Insight* - especially in chapters 5 and 16, were and are at a remoteness that was quite beyond the reachings of Einstein, Feynman, Hawking, Bell, Penrose, etc etc. But that is another story, to be told in chapter 14 of a forthcoming book, *Lonergan's Standard Model of Effective Global Inquiry*. My topic here is that Standard Model, where the name brings in a clear reference to present physics, though the standard model of Lonergan sublates fantastically that standard model.

But before I get to the question and the quest of sublation, I must recall my acquisition of Bill's book at the Lonergan Conference at Loyola Marymount, Los Angeles, in March 2006. First there was the shock of finding what I might call the cut-off, a halt with the completion of *Insight*. Some moments later there was the delight at

¹William A. Mathews, *Lonergan's Quest. A Study of Desire in the Authoring of Insight*, University of Toronto Press, 2006, 477.

²I might well have typed 1949-50 there, in the clear memory of pausing over a book in a public library in Dublin that dealt with the famous Balmer hydrogen lines, sensing the want to make sense of them. The want remains, and I am getting there.

the cunning of the cut-off: that cut-off leaves the book as a clear challenge to the philosophical tradition.³ Will the challenge be met, taken up? The point of my viewing, reviewing, however, is, oddly, not the problem of such a taking up.⁴ My viewing here is, I would suspect, a viewing that is read only by disciples of Lonergan interested in getting Mathews' perspective on the man and his struggle. Well, you wont: Or should I say, you will, if you climb with him towards the meaning of his last sentence. What do I mean by "climb with him"?

I climbed with him in memory through his dense delineation of the climb, thinking also of his slow laborious climb towards that delineation.⁵ How does one climb with him? In the full sense, that question and that invitation points to a Proustian cherishing of that cup of tea, that piece of cake⁶, on which you might strive to take a

³In my Introduction to *Phenomenology and Logic* I point (see pp. xxii-xxiii and the notes there) to the mess to be associated with Bill Mathews focus on judgment and truth.

⁴Oddly, because of course that *is* my problem, to which my answer is No, the challenge will not be taken up in the present context of culture. My thesis is, and has been for some decades, that functional specialization in a minimalist sense is to be the pragmatic context of that taking-up. Chapter 3 of my *Pastkeynes Pastmodern Economics: A Fresh Pragmatism* gives indications, but the issue has the complexity of the "catch of history" mentioned below. Here I can only draw your attention usefully to the way in which my view shifts the bent of Lonergan's *Insight*. Yes, "there is needed, then, a further manifestation of finality" (*Insight*, 633[655]) but it is not just the Incarnation of the Spoke of history - which so far does not seem to have worked too profoundly. And No, on my pragmatic view it is not now the case that "the possibility of cosmopolis is conditioned by the possibility of a critical human science, and a critical human science is conditioned by the possibility of a correct and accepted philosophy" (*Insight*, 690 [712]). Yes, Lonergan's view jives with mine when possibility is taken as "within human reach" but I am here taking it as within the context of emergent probability. The concrete possibility - or probability-scheduling - of the serious intussusception of either *Insight* or Mathews' book is the emergence of a general cultural acceptance of global cyclic functional collaboration. This is the condition of the emergence of critical and accepted human science and philosophy.

⁵See, as just one of many examples, Mathews' dense precise presentation of Lonergan's doctorate work towards *Grace and Freedom*.

⁶The reference is, of course, to the tea and the little cake of Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*.

stand: is it your cup of tea, are you up to cognizing that it is not a piece of cake, not a ramble round a familiar problem? That same summer of 1953 in which Lonergan gathered the story of his climb for publication, Hillary and Tensing climbed Everest. That climb is now almost a popular excursion, but in contrast Lonergan's climb was a climb to the invention of a mountain, a mountain that vanished in the print, to be reinvented by some few in this century, by a community in millennia to come. Is it your cup of tea, your bucket of being? I am thinking now of Newton's spinning bucket and of the title of the first section of chapter 14 of *Lonergan's Standard Model of Effective Global Inquiry*: "Spinning Newton's Bucket." How well did you climb with Lonergan through that dense couple of pages he wrote about Newton's bucket?⁷ Mathews' climb is much more densely expressed than that. Where does this leave you? I would ask you at least to entertain my paralleling seriously. Come to sense the parallel: reading about Everest's conquest is clearly a different venture from putting your best foot skyward.

Mathews' book, will not, I suspect, be read with Proustian seriousness by the present generation of Lonergan students, much less taken seriously by the wider tradition. Its fate, in our times, is to be the fate of *Insight*. The longer cycle of decline does not slope up abruptly.⁸ How, then, might one envisage an effective turn for the better?

Notice that we have reached, in this question, an expression of the other half of

⁷*Insight*, 152-5[176-79]. Contrast Brian Greene's messing around with the bucket (see his *The Fabric of the Cosmos*, Knopf, New York, 2004, the pages around his index references to *bucket of spinning water*). Our quest, as we seek to glimpse, is to help towards the institutionalization of their recycled corrective togetherness.

⁸I am presenting in this brief paper a simple image of the longer cycles of decline and incline, but part of the "catch of general history" referred to below is to make **general** both as a theoretic and as an incarnate street-presence a view of human history as beginning with the strange emergence of a graced organic reality witted yet witless in the guarding of its inner light. The quest, what-to-do with the cosmos, is lost in the branches of its swinging trees. There is a millennium-long theological road of recycling ahead to a serious perspective on the journey from Eden to Eschaton.

Lonergeran's quest, one that was - as I know from Bill - part of his earlier text. Bill might well have written in his Epilogue, as Lonergan did in the beginning of his Epilogue to *Insight*, of "the inception of a far larger" work. But Bill has done his bit, and there is a profound sense in which that far larger work has to be taken up as a task of community in history facing "the real catch"⁹ of history: the improbable shift to the emergence of a general global taken-for-grantedness of the "many members of that one body" in "satisfactory"¹⁰ care of emergent probability.

We come now to the question of our pragmatic quest, which is the question of the August 2006 gathering in Vancouver. That is a quest for the beginnings of functional specialization. But the quest here is for a core motivation to pursue personally or at least promote communally that quest. The motivation comes from recognizing that the deeper quest of Lonergan was to change history. My conviction is that the heart of the dynamics of that changing was his discovery of February 1965, the invention of functional specialization. But he had characterized what he was looking for more than a dozen years before when he gave his five-point sketch of Cosmopolis at the conclusion of chapter 7 of *Insight*.

The exercise that I now invite is a creative reading of that sketch. Bear in mind, of course, all that I have said about the denseness of both Lonergan and Mathews: this packed conclusion to section 8 of chapter 7 of *Insight* is the result of a quarter century of climbing. I regularly paused with students, in my two decades of undergraduate teaching, over the problem of reaching for meaning here, by taking a single phrase of the section, "the social situation deteriorates cumulatively."¹¹ The suggested question -

⁹*Topics in Education*, 236.

¹⁰The implicit reference here is to Joistings 8, "Recycling Satisfaction", where I mesh the emergence of functional specialization with the theology of satisfaction and the dynamic of collaborative needs expressed by Paul in *First Corinthians* chapters 12 and 14.

¹¹*Insight*, 229[254].

for you now - is for the meaning of that phrase, a meaning that should have some growing bone-bent marrow-mesh. Is that deterioration such as to “make human life unlivable”¹² for you, nerve-edged by “the monster that has stood forth in our day”¹³: or are you just puttering along fairly contentedly numb in this evil low point of the long axial period?

There is little point in my summarizing the five characteristics. What I would prefer to do is to expand them considerably and to add to them a sixth characterization: the one implicit here: the answer to Lonergan’s quest is functional specialization.¹⁴ Further, what is meant by “expand” can be gleaned from my efforts to enlighten the community on that sixth characterization and gleaned too can be the seeming futility of the effort in the face of what I refer to as “the catch of history.”¹⁵ One escapes that catch by rising in the Clasp of history to genuine fantasy and the mention of that rising and that Clasp allows me to lay aside an obvious feature of Cosmopolis: the problem is not the divine collaboration but ours, and that is my focus.¹⁶ We must do everything, to recall Ignatius of Loyola, as if the result depended solely on that effort.

But I must leave you to the exercise of reading those few pages, catching here and there little insights within what has to be a slow humble effort to embrace history

¹²Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, 232.

¹³*Method in Theology*, 40.

¹⁴I would note that this addition corresponds to my usual addition of (10) to Lonergan’s list of (9) in *Method in Theology*, 287.

¹⁵The sixth characterization has been a life-work, beginning with pointers regarding musicology in 1969. One outstanding instance of expanding is the 200 pages of SOFDAWAREs and *Quodlibets* written about that single page 250 of *Method in Theology*: so far, a massively ineffectual appeal. It awaits recycling.

¹⁶The relevant diagram here, named later W3, is that of page 124 of *A Brief History of Tongue*. There my focus can be seen to be the essential tower of collaboration, rolled out as a rectangle. The bottom part of the diagram points to a Trinitarian perspective on history. Above I am using my more recent expression of Trinitarian personalities: Speak, Spoke, Clasp.

within the Clasp of history.

Does functional specialization, in the longer cycle of incline, “force and cajole,”¹⁷ but not as police? As a global dynamic of inquiry, is it not “to witness to the possibility of ideas”?¹⁸ Is it not extremely practical in going about its own non-busybody business of recycling, so that it “does not waste its time and energy”¹⁹ on controversy and pseudo-dialogue? Is not that recycling also relentlessly self-critical of its future and ours? Finally, fifthly, is not the implementation of that fantasy of a global integral interdisciplinary collaboration “not easy”?²⁰

So we come to my additional characterization, one that merges with Lonergan’s remarks in his “Conclusion”. “A final observation has to do with method.”²¹ He recalls his view of generalized empirical method, which for me is the first of the three definitions pointed to in Joistings 21. Then he writes “in the present chapter, the nature of this generalized method has come to light” The light is his limp ineffective view of dialectic, a dialectic that in its developed form would be as effectively relevant to global

¹⁷See *Insight*, 398[423].

¹⁸*Insight*, 239[264].

¹⁹*Insight*, 239[264].

²⁰*Insight*, 241[266].

²¹*Insight*, 243[268].

progress as “the operator equation is to recent physics.”²² It would bring conscious subjects in their neural basis together in an “integration for specialized studies” that would be “adjustable to any course of events.”²³ One may think of that togetherness in the context of his 29 mentions of **collaboration** in the penultimate section of *Insight*. And then one might muse over that weak final section of the book, where he leans so heavily on a slim intimation of the relevance of the Speak and Spoke and Clasp of history: “The problem of general history, which is the real catch”²⁴ had thus far defeated the fifty year old genius. It would be more than a decade before he would bring forth his location of dialectic in a new set of differentiations of human consciousness. He was then to sketch, in those tired years of the late 1960s, briefly and at times badly, what for me is his final achievement on method: the fourth definition of generalized empirical method.

²²*Insight*, 244[269]. The five words at note 11 above provide a challenge to your sense of how well you are reading *Insight*, but these seven words give you a much more discomfiting challenge. Obviously, they come from his creative and critical reading of Lindsay and Margenau. They brilliantly point to the reach beyond the differential equations of classical physics - just mentioned there by him - to the problem of concrete reference. Classical equations express heuristically forms, “an abstract relational field”(*Insight* 494[517]), normally reaching for continuous secondary determinations. The muddled crisis of twentieth century physics was a matter of handling the non-continuity of such determinations. Heisenberg, in 1925, hit on matrix operators that would reach in that direction of concrete verifiability and implementability. Lonergan, in 1965, hit on the matrix of collaboration, C_{ij} , (see *A Brief History of Tongue*, page 108), that is to reach for the concrete of human possibilities when it is gradually put in global place. This is in deep contrast with present Lonerganesque thinking regarding categories, where the thinking with regard to concrete implementation, not reaching secondary determinations like Laser (“Lightwave Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation”) technology, seems old and classical and “effete”(*Method in Theology*, 99). Lonergan’s Lightwave Stimulation technology is a new and beautiful and efficient metaphysics.(On efficiency as central to metaphysics, see *Topics in Education*, 160, line 16).

²³*Insight*, 244[269].

²⁴*Topics in Education*, 236.