

Bridgepoise 1

All the Bridges and B-ridges of Being

There is a sense in which this series brings me back - or forward - to a previous series *Eldorede*.¹ What I wish especially here is not to discourage you, and you may well have found it discouraging if I had moved immediately to pointers, say, from James Joyce, so let me keep the beginning of this effort simple. It will take this entire unfinished series to spell out, for both you and me, the meaning of my title, but a simple start comes from me just pausing, in an elementary fashion, over the first meaning that gave rise to it.

That meaning is the meaning of my poise, actual and normative, before death. I typed just now the words *in an elementary fashion* and that is my aim, but obviously the fashion for you is the fashion of your reading, and the fashion for me is a control of expression towards the smaller aim. You may well be reading this with a massively non-elementary meaning, altogether richer than my meaning as I move now forward from my 78th birthday. My temptation, this very typing moment, is to slip into reflections on that, and on the non-elementary meaning that is dominant in this moment, so nicely and densely put by Lonergan: “.... heading towards the systematization, not of the particular animal that I am, but of the whole universe of being”.² Where am I, where are you, going? No doubt the question dances round a reading of Lonergan’s statement, “absolutely speaking, his central form could be separated from prime potency without ceasing to ground an existing unity and identity.”³ But *his* points to me and perhaps a missing *her* points to you, and the *could be*

¹The series of 13 essays, *Eldorede*, are oriented towards simpler communication of basic insights. They find their place in the full *Cantower* series, as *Field Nocturnes Cantower 101*: an accidental but convenient numerical symbolism. The full structured list of Cantowers is available in *Field Nocturnes CanTower 43*.

²*Insight*, 539.

³*Ibid.*, 543.

is an approaching state, and the *ceasing* may be a troublesome non-absolute hearing here in now.⁴

But this is not the topic of this first *Bridgepoise*. The topic, in this first ramble, is a drawing of attention to some of the many meanings of *bridgepoise* that we can stir up, that we can and do share. We may well share quests and answers around your type-face and mine as the series spirals forward round the many meanings, and especially we may share on this particular first and central meaning of *bridgepoise*. But not yet, and “we are not there yet.”⁵

You might now skip, for the present, the rambles of the rest of this Bridgepoise, and move to the second and third essays which are posted here: these are present concerns of mine, both related to conferences of 2010. Bridgepoise 2, “Functional Collaboration and Education” is written with the Vancouver Conference (July 5th - 9th) of that title in mind. What is to be expected from that Conference, and how might one gear up for it?⁶ Bridgepoise 3, “The Liberal Arts as the Core of Future Science”, is for a later conference, but it is relevant to our efforts in this series, an effort to shift to a fuller existential poise regarding and guarding generalized empirical method as specified in *A Third Collection*.⁷ It is useful to repeat that expression here, if only to grant you the possibility of a diagnosis of an “Existential Gap”⁸: how, for instance, do you read the

⁴This is an enormously complex topic into which philosophy and theology has so far not seriously and empirically ventured. See earlier(1989) rambling of mine in *Process: Introducing Themselves to Young (Christian) Minders*, note 8 of chapter four. It was only in the late 1980s that I began to think seriously about the gap in serious thinking that is named *Eschatology*.

⁵Lonergan, *For A New Political Economy*, 20. The comment is followed by a powerful challenging paragraph.

⁶See, on this, note 9 below, the remainder of the text of the paragraph containing it, as well as the paragraph that follows.

⁷*A Third Collection*, 141.

⁸See the index to *Phenomenology and Logic* under *Existential gap*.

word *treat* in its two occurrences in those, in these, lines of *A Third Collection*:

“Generalized empirical method operates on a combination of both the data of sense and the data of consciousness: it does not treat of objects without taking into account the corresponding operations of the subject; it does not treat of the subject’s operations without taking into account the corresponding objects.”

So, you notice already that *Bridgepoise* has some possible meanings that point us forward in inwardness, and indeed point us in in forwardness. The Conference in Vancouver is a Bridgepoise, all the more so in being recognized as such with some degree, some tincture, of luminousness. It is important to recognize that tincture of recognition, and such recognition is the whole point, pointing, of the series. The whole point, pointing, is, of course, that of bringing into our light and life the reach into the second time of humanity, ontically and phyletically. GEM2, as I call the principle expressed in *A Third Collection*, requires us to be luminous in our doings, our treatings, our treatises. In the third stage of meaning - the second time of humanity - we are, for example, to be luminous in our use of money: certainly a strange promising microautonomy.⁹ In the Vancouver Conference we reach for such microautonomy and mesoautonomy: a reach to be present to ourselves in a new way, poised effectively on a bridge to new patterns of local self-expression and global collaboration. It is to be a group effort to humbly face that shift. It is an effort to be aided by the bent expressed in *Bridgepoise* 3, but the bent is not the luminous bent of a committed group adequately poised: the expressed bent is an expression to, towards, and in what, in the main, is an alien truncated scene.

More obviously, the Conference in which the expression is offered of “The Next

⁹Microautonomy was first introduced as a topic in chapter 10 of *Wealth of Self*. The strange promise of and to the future is the central topic of P.McShane, *Sane Economics and Fusionism*, Axial Publishing, 2010. The second half of that book, *Fusionism*, is the proximate context of our efforts at the Vancouver Conference of July 2010. The next *Bridgepoise* invites us to sniff just what is at stake in the needed **transition**, and *Bridgepoise* 4, “Promises! Promises!”, carries us further.

100 years of the Liberal Arts”, is not one in which the audience is searching to be poised on a bridge in any luminous way. If the expression is to have effect, it is to have it through the dynamic spread of the shift sought in the Vancouver gathering: and other such gatherings.

But I am going on too much about this, when what I wish to do is simply get you thinking of a range of possible meanings for the enterprise of bridgepoising. Perhaps I should make a rambling list? But first, note that *bridgepoise* can mean a poise before attempting to cross, a poise on the bridge, a poise that is the result of the crossing.

There is the obvious named bridge in the first paragraph of chapter 5 of *Insight*: Lonergan envisages that chapter to be a bridge to chapter 6. A discomfiting suggestion to all of us.

There is the bridge that Catherine of Siena talks of in *The Dialogue*, the Word Incarnate as Bridge. I would note, tantalizingly, that this Bridge is, for the person of kataphatic prayer who seeks to be part of the collaboration of the Tower of Able, strangely related to the previously mentioned bridge.

And there is the bridge that is intellectual conversion: Liddy and Morelli have nudged us to come to grips with the difficulty of its crossing.¹⁰ We may ask ourselves how we are poised in relation to that bridge, in our cherishing of a view of Jack and Jill relating to each other on that bridge.¹¹

And so on. There are, for instances, the bridges that I wrote of in the article “Features of Generalized Empirical Method: A Bridge Too Far?”¹² But I have said

¹⁰The most recent pointers are in Mark Morelli, “Lonergan’s Debt to Hegel and the Appropriation of Critical Realism,” *Meaning and History in Systematic Theology. Essays in honor of Robert M. Doran SJ*, edited by John D.Dadosky, Marquette University Press, 2009, 415-22.

¹¹*Cantower 9*, “Position, Poisition, Protopossession”, is an earlier version of the posing of these questions.

¹²*Creativity and Method*, edited by M.Lamb, Marquette University Press, 1981.

enough to show how far-reaching the topic is, weaving about all the ridges of being and becoming. And we might parallel the implicit question What is a Bridge? with Joyce's implicit question, What is a River?, what is the weave of the whole *riverrun*¹³ in each of us? Joyces' question flows through 20 dense pages - 196- 216 - of *Finnegans Wake*. "O / tell me all about / Anna Livia! I want to hear all" (196). Can you imagine a weave of pages round about all the bridges of the world, real, mythical, metaphorical?¹⁴ And the telling can only be luminous darkness, even the everlasting telling is night night.¹⁵

"Can't hear with the waters of. The chittering waters of. Flittering bats, fieldmice bawk talk. Ho! Are you not gone ahome? What Thom Malone? Can't hear with bawk of bats, all thim liffeying waters of. Ho, talk save us! My foos won't moos. I feel as old as yonder elm. A tale told of Shaun and Shem? All Livia's daughtersons. Dark hawks hear us. Night night! My ho head halls. I feel as heavy as yonder stone. Tell me of John or Shawn? Who were Shem and Shaun the living sons or daughters of? Night now! Tell me, tell me, tell me, elm! Night night! Telmetale of stem or stone. Beside the rivering

¹³The first word of *Finnegans Wake* with it relevant layered meanings of run, pronounced roon in Gaelic: roon means both secret and beloved in that language, and it has other European meanings. In the essay, "The Importance of Rescuing Insight" (199-225 of *The Importance of Insight. Essays in Honour of Michael Vertin*, edited by John J. Liptay and David S. Liptay, University of Toronto Press, 2007) there is a section **Reverierun** (213-15) whose context broadens the meaning in a variety of ways. The primary broadening I would draw attention to is the relation to adult growth, normatively an accelerating reality, actually an assumed stabilization ("Less than 1% of adults grow": Maslow). It is a topic I return to regularly: see *Lack in the Beingstalk*, concluding pages.

¹⁴Recall section 1.5, "Myth and Allegory," of chapter 17 of *Insight* "Metaphor is revised and contracted myth and myth is anticipated and expanded metaphor" (*Insight*, 569).

¹⁵This is a difficult topic, yet it is not a new topic, either for me or for humanity. I ended my little book, *Wealth of Self and Wealth of Nations: Self-Axis of the Great Ascent*, with the two words *Infinite Surprise*. What is the character of that infinite surprise? Molecular spirit's destiny is to spiral in, into, the divine. Thomas Aquinas was not a master of genetic dynamics, but he was clear enough on the paradox of the end point. No finite mind, even the human mind of Jesus, can comprehend the divine. Further, a failure to comprehend does not mean a getting half way, or quarter way. The gap is infinite. Night night. Surprise surprise!

waters of, hitherandthithering waves of. Night!”¹⁶

¹⁶*Finnegans Wake*, 216.