

Field Nocturnes CanTower 117

Insight 17. Dialectic Transposed to Cyclic Progress.

It is certainly too late in my life to start yet another book on *Method*, say, *Method in Global Care*. Som few pointers, then, is the best I can do in ending this Cantower Series that I started on All Fools day of 2002, which also happened that year to be Easter Monday, so, the anniversary of the Irish Revolution of 1916. All deliberate and even providential. And perhaps the show is already on the road as this appears on the Website? *Lonergan's Standard Model of Effective Global Inquiry* was aimed loosely at a fantasy of the year 2111 as a time when the global cyclic collaboration would be recognizable: no longer a sunflower seed, but a small smiling plant. Then at least, a hundred years from now, I would like to think that my melancholy recording of directions had been listened to.

The poem that lay behind that reaching towards 2111 was a poem by Patrick Kavanagh, worth quoting here. It is a short poem which startled me so in the late 1960s that I put it to a strange tune with strange guitar chordings in my isolated little Jesuit box.

“The bird’s sang in the wet trees.
And as I listened to them it was a hundred years from now.
And I was dead, and someone else was listening to them,
And I was glad I had recorded for him,
The melancholy”¹

But why do I write of melancholy? Why that type of gloom? I had the suggestion of functional collaboration pitched at me by Lonergan on eight fingers in 1966. Three years later its so obvious relevance to musicology became obvious to me as I brooded

¹Patrick Kavanagh, “A Wet Evening in April”, *Collected Poems*, London, 1964, 140. The poem became the center-piece Interlude of the little book mentioned in the following note.
+ 100 years...

over the small holdings in the Old Bodleian Library in Oxford.² Yet forty years later, nothing much has happened towards the emergence of the collaboration. Surely grounds for gloom. I write this in the Autumn of 2008, and, again I muse, perhaps by the time it is up on the Website there may have been a beginning? It is quite easy to connect this writing with Eric Voegelin's last writing, when he began with that question sentence that I used to begin the *Cantowers* for that All Fool's Day. "Where does the Beginning Begin? As I am putting down these words on an empty page I have begun to write a sentence that, when it is finished, will be the beginning of a chapter on certain problems of beginning."³

Well, this is a final Beginagain, and even if the show is a little on the road by December 2011 - the date set for my concluding of the 117 *Cantowers* - it is no harm in

²I recall vividly sitting beside those few shelves of books and journals on music - music now occupies a large room in the New Bodleian - and the dawning that led to "Metamusic and Self-Meaning", which was the second of two papers offered at the International Lonergan Conference of Easter 1970. The other paper, on the methodology of botany, was titled "Image and Emergence: Towards an Adequate *Weltanschauung*". The two papers form the two halves of the small book, *Plants and Pianos. Two Essays in Advanced Methodology*, published at the Milltown Institute, 1971. The first essay was supplemented by the insertion of a series of quotations from Joyce's *Ulysses*; the second essay had insertions from Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. I still find the paralleling suggestive. **Bloom!** is the name of the man and the lady, and the imperative of the game, in the first pair, *Insight* and *Ulysses*. The heart of the second pair of books is the first word of *Finnegans Wake*, **riverrun**. The work mentioned in note 5 below has a concluding key section (pp. 213 -15) titled "Riverierun". The word *run* [pronounce roon because of a marking that designates a long u that I must omit through incompetence of self and machine] means both **beloved** and **secret** in Gaelic. The Scandinavian resonances are obviously there too. The small book was later integrated in *The Shaping of the Foundations*, University Press of America, 1976, where two more essays were added, "Zoology and the Future of Philosophy" and "Instrumental Acts of Meaning and Fourth-level Functional Specialization". The Epilogue of the book was titled, "Authentic Subjectivity and International Growth: Foundations". I go into detail here because the pointers seem sufficient to justify present brevity. I finished the book on my 45th birthday, recalling Husserl's letter to Brentano on his 45th birthday, where he writes of being a miserable beginner. I was not miserable, nor a beginner: I had been gripped by the Position and was struggling forward. More on that issue of adult growth in note 14 below.

³Eric Voegelin, *In Search of Order*, Vol. 5, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1987, 13.

collecting pointers to the emergently obvious. The note on page 153 in *Method in Theology*, which is the naming by Lonergan of the project titled here, is no great help, unless you are already in the know. Yes, one expects that the stuff in *Insight* chapter 17 is going to be spread through the specialties, but what might Lonergan have meant by the claim that “what there is termed a universal viewpoint, here is realized by advocating a distinct functional specialty named dialectic”? He was such a tricky accurate writer that I would not be surprised if he meant what he said in ways subtler than a casual read would lend his words. But here we are in the business of getting beyond casual reading. How far beyond casual reading are we, you and I? Let me not assume that you are positional, or poositional, and certainly not protopossessional.⁴ Such an assumption would be the assumption of a sturdy sunflower, a community with a foundational stand that lifts Helen’s handword into a deep personal neurodynamic heuristic. Are **youtherethus**?

1. The Audience of the Universal Viewpoint

The term universal viewpoint - the reality, then, not the word - was a term, an inner practical word, of Lonergan at fifty.⁵ It was a realization in him at that time which

⁴*Cantower 9*, “Position, Poosition, Protopossession” gives some hints of the slow climb up through these levels of positioning. It took me five further years after that essay to figure out what should be properly meant by *protopossession*.

⁵I cannot resist throwing in here his reach as he approached fifty, expressed in a 1954 May letter to Fr. Fred Crowe, Lonergan typed:

"The Method in Theology is coming into perspective. For the Trinity: Imago Dei in homine and proceed to the limit as in evaluating $[1 + 1/n]^n$ as n approaches infinity. For the rest: ordo universi. From the viewpoint of theology, it is a manifold of unities developing in relation to one another and in relation to God."

What did he mean by this? See my reflections on the matter in *Field Nocturne 2*, “Lonergan’s Obscurest Challenge to His Followers”. The essay, and the series, puts the challenge to adult growth into the new context of neurodynamic competence. See *Field Nocturne 12*: “Self-Appropriating the Inner Parts”.

perhaps he was optimistic about sharing in pre-cosmopolis culture. By 1965 he may have been discouraged: that is a complex biographical issue. At all events the sentence quoted above rolls on to claim that dialectic as he was specifying it in *Method in Theology* is advocated “here” (and now) as the source of the realization of the universal viewpoint. Advocated, obviously by him: yet there is a larger sense of advocated that is worth considering. Dialectic is advocated by its place in the circuit, advocated then by the operating group of specialists. That larger sense fits in with a view I have held for some time about the failure of *Insight* to generate anything like the viewpoint that was the inner word of Lonergan at fifty, within which there was a grasp of the heuristic called the universal viewpoint. What is to lift that viewpoint towards a communal sharing is the pressure within the working cycle.

I have talked of the working of that pressure before in various places and in different ways. Quite evident, perhaps, is the manner in which different disciplines slope differently towards a convergence on a single shared dialectic reflection. But the pressure I would note now, since our focus is on chapter 17 of *Insight*, is the pressure hidden in the following paragraph of that compact sketch, *The Sketch* of section 3.6:

“Thirdly, there are pure formulations. They proceed from the immanent source of meaning to determine differentiations of the protean notion of being. Such differentiations may be either the content of single judgments or the contexts constituted by more or less coherent aggregates of judgments. In either case they are pure formulations if they proceed from an interpreter that grasp the universal viewpoint and if they are addressed to an audience that similarly grasps the universal viewpoint.”⁶

Pure formulations: what might they be? The instances that occurred to me back in the 1980s were Lonergan’s own efforts in such a work as *The Incarnate Word* to pin down “metaphysically” what was going on through the sequence of councils. These,

⁶*Insight*, 580[602].

indeed, would seem to be like “contents of single judgments.” But now I would emphasize the fuller view - is it not of the other phrase in that sentence, about “the contexts”? - that one has, that holds one, when one thinks of the set of Metawords, Wi.

But the important thing is to figure out what is operatively meant by *audience* in the new functional context. Then you have managed to place a transformative heart in the middle of *The Sketch*. You leap to identifying the audience with the Tower Community, the normal audience being the next functional specialist group. So, the interpreter, in terms familiar by now, passes the baton on to historians. And, in my terms, they are sharing not just the universal viewpoint filled out to its best “level of the times”, but also the genetic systematics that becomes increasingly refined through recycling. And, there is the FS_i that, in its refinements for a given specialty is a matter of that specialty, but in broader heuristic, is contained in the stance of the actual universal viewpoint. So, instead of the universal view point of *Insight*, there is the complex that I symbolize as $UV + GS + FS_i$.

Is this enough of a pointer? It lifts my previous reflections on *The Sketch* and the Canons (section 3.8) into a fuller context, and the lift is sufficient for the step-by-step transposition of those texts.⁷ Other pointers, of course, are relevant. So, for instance, the cultivation of the different discussions of “Desire Undistanced”⁸ lifts the context, and the collaborating community, to a higher level of luminousness regarding the Tower and its place in progress. There is a way in which one can grasp the functional closeness of collaboration from specialty to specialty as an undistancing of desire. The sharing

⁷See chapter 9 of *ChrISt in History* (on the Website), “Interpretation”, for pointers on this.

⁸Two such discussions are *FNC 49*, “Desire Undistanced Part 1” and *FNC 116*, “Desire Undistanced Part Two”. An earlier discussion is *Field Nocturne 37* “Desire Undistanced : Light”. The Context is the recent book by the phenomenologist Renaud Barbaras, *Desire and Distance*, which is a topic in *Field Nocturne 36*, “Desire and Distance”. [I should include details of the Barbaras book, originally in French, but available in English: *Desire and Distance: Introduction to the Phenomenology of Perception*, translated by Paul B.Milan, Stanford University Press, 2006.]

round the circuit is gentler, more humane and human in its genesis of insights.

The word *humaneness* is not, of course, to be considered as pointing to some sort of regression or some type of meeting of minds that dodges aggression. Indeed, dialectic as it is spelled out in the second half of page 250 of *Method in Theology* can be discomfortingly aggressive as well as uncompromisingly progressive. The humane and human aspect is precisely this: the cyclic progress nudges the group forward towards a common high contemporary standard of care.

2. WikiCare

Yet as I write this Beginagain, winding towards the end of my million word project, it is increasingly clear to me that many of my colleagues, and I have in mind the senior followers of Lonergan, are unconvinced, and are set on their course of old-style thinking, paper-writing, conferences, debates. That course is one of commonsense, indeed I claim it is a course of general commonsense bias.⁹ I have been appealing to them for forty years. Perhaps, indeed my most blunt and clear appeal was one that referred directly to the possibility, in the years of retirement, of getting the show on the road.¹⁰ Why, then, should I not be melancholy? Not only is the show of no interest to them, but they are consistently misleading the next generation.

Lest you think that I am off now on a hobby-horse distraction I would have you note that I have simply moved forward exactly one page in either edition of the book

⁹I have written previous about the pressure of that bias on Lonergan, pretty evident in his lectures from 1958 on. See *Field Nocturne CanTower 47*, ‘What-to-do?’: the Heart of Lonergan’s Ethics”. See also chapter 1 of Part 3 of Pierrot Lambert and Philip McShane, *Bernard Lonergan. His Life and Leading Ideas* (forthcoming in various languages).

¹⁰The work was written to honour Michael Vertin on his retirement. “The Importance of Rescuing *Insight*,” pp.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. The essay is available in the present series as *Field Nocturne CanTower 114*, “Needed at 64”.

Insight.¹¹ The paragraph deals with what Lonergan calls minor resistance - minor compared to the major counterpositional resistance he gets to in the next paragraphs - and, at the end of the paragraph, he is optimistic about it. "It should cause no greater difficulty in the field of interpretation than its analogue does in physics."¹² The analogue in physics he gives is "tensor fields and eigen-functions", neither of which innovations in early twentieth century physics mean anything much to my colleagues, or to most people interested in Lonergan's inspiring directives. I see no point now in going back over this question of legitimate layers of interests. It surely is obvious enough that one can do great good as, say, a teacher or preacher, by having a decent nominal grip on Lonergan's dynamics of questioning or on a descriptive core of his Trinitarian or Christological theology.¹³ But Lonergan's interest here, and at this stage in the book, is in frontline struggling: and again I see no point in going back to either his or my arguments against outdatedness of perspective, breathlessness, lateness, big frogs in little ponds, ghettos, etc.¹⁴ The normative stand is clear: "they are to collaborate in the

¹¹The coincidence, of course, delights me. In the old edition you cross from page 580 to 581 at 22 lines from the end; in the new edition you cross from page 602 to 603 with 5 lines to go. The paragraph of our interest starts 22 and 5 lines, respectively, from the end of the next page.

¹²*Insight*, 581[603].

¹³The dynamics of questioning, part of elementary grammarology, are diagramed in Appendix A of *Phenomenology and Logic*. An elementary self-guide to Trinitarian theology is contained in the self-contemplation of the questions: "When did I last have a real conversation?" "When was I last understanding, understood?", "when did I last speak?" "When did I last listen?" On Christology, see *Joistings* 8: "Recycling Satisfaction", or *Process* chapter 5. Taking the diagrams of minding in Appendix A, *Phenomenology and Logic*, into the context of the two Pauline passages on the minding of Jesus - I Cor 2:16, Phil 2: 5 - gives an existential lift to Christology. Finally, a fuller Eschatology brings out his likeness to us in His everlasting growing excitement about the incomprehensibility, for any human mind, of the divine essence.

¹⁴In my first week with Lonergan, in Dublin, Easter 1961, he spoke of "big frogs in little ponds" in commenting on post-Tridentine theology. And I cannot resist throwing in a remark he made to me as we drove away from a dinner we later lived through in the Jesuit Provincial's residence: "What century were we in?"

light of common but abstruse principles and to have their individual results checked by general requirements that envisage simultaneously the totality of results.”

Over the years I have noticed that the so-called experts in Lonergan seem to work very much alone, on their own track. Collaboration just isn't part of their reality, and this effects even their availability to students. I used to think spontaneously about the Lone Ranger mentality, but yesterday I came across another characterization, first cousin to Lonerangerism¹⁵: “Tarzan economics.” The name is attributed to Jim Griffin, managing director of One House LLC, who remarks, “We cling to the vine that holds us off the jungle floor and we can't let go of the one we've got until we've got the next vine firmly in our hand.”¹⁶ The problem of functional collaboration is that it is not there, a feeble present dangling vine swinging towards our hand, swinging our hand towards one another in baton-exchange: it leaves each of us the challenge of a leap, of going out on a limb, certainly of letting go of old ways, old bottles.¹⁷

But perhaps the mentality being advocated - that word again! - in *Wikinomics* would be the source of a better analogue, then one from physics, for the past and

¹⁵Until I typed that neologism I did not see that it was a matter of taking the g out of Lonergan and relocating it as an ending of a great name and game. G? The gist, the glory? Relocation? A ghetto, some ghoul-ash?

¹⁶I quote from Don Tapscott and Anthony D. Williams, *Wikinomics. How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything*, Portfolio (Penguin Group), 2006, p. 271. I refer to this book later as **Wikinomics**.

¹⁷*Method in Theology: Revisions and Implementations* points out, in chapter 10, that we do not have metaphysical equivalents of functional collaboration. There is an issue here of Belief in its scientific relevance is described in chapter 20 of *Insight*. Was the elder Lonergan deluded, twelve years after *Insight*, into thinking that a new filing system would do it? Or had he solved the problem of cosmopolis? There is a deeper issue here of accelerating adult growth and unremovable belief: see the conclusion of *Lack in the Beingstalk*, and also *Field Nocturne 2* mentioned in note 5 above. Normatively, each of us accelerates away from ourselves in our growing in meaning. Younger humans have no way round the challenge of believing genuine Elders. How are those to be found in the contemporary world? Richard Branson's strategy - his “global elder” business took off in 2007 - just does not effectively meet global needs. “Advocating a distinct functional specialty named dialectic” is the global wikicare way.

present generations of Lonergan scholars? You might imagine the Lonergan Centre in Toronto, now located in an improved location in Regis College, but is it improved in its global outreach?¹⁸ Or might we not compare it to Goldcorp Inc., the topic of the first paragraph of *Wikinomics*? “The small Toronto-based gold-mining firm was struggling, besieged by strikes, lingering debts, and an exceedingly high cost of production, which had caused them to cease mining operations.”¹⁹ Rob McEwen was the CEO, and in his rescue speech to his geologists he made the statement: “We’re going to find more gold on this property, and we won’t leave this room tonight until we have a plan to find it.”²⁰

260 pages later, in the beginning of chapter 10, entitled “**Collaborative Minds: The Power of Thinking Differently**”, the authors come back to McEwen. “McEwen saw things differently. Yes, geological data was important, but it was no use to anyone if Goldcorp’s internal geologists were ill equipped to make sense of it. McEwen released the data on the Internet and challenged the world to do the prospecting.”²¹

The parallel is there. Lonergan scholars are ill-equipped to meet the challenge of our post-modern axial times. What is the point of me going on further, doing a parallel to *Wikinomics* in order to make my “Ideagoras”²² case for “A Journey to the New

¹⁸The Toronto Centre is only one of many such Lonergan Centres about which this question needs to be asked. Then there are the Conferences, Workshops, etc etc, which do not seem to have any serious effective global reach, nor any effective unity. The issue of unity and effectiveness is key here: “It is quite legitimate to seek in the efficient cause of the science, that is, in the scientist, the reason why a science forms a unified whole.”(Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, 160, line 16).

¹⁹**Wikinomics**, 7.

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹**Wikinomics**, 268.

²²The title of chapter 4 of **Wikinomics**.

Innovation"?²³ I have spun this yarn, this web, already in many odd ways.

McEwen talks of not leaving the room till a plan emerges. I talk of, plead for, **advocate**, entering page 250 of *Method in Theology* on whatever level we are up to²⁴ and staying with it, with Lonergan, with each other, until we are each forced to be honest about taking an operative stand for or against the brilliant plan that is in that page, the heart of the cyclic cosmopolis of our global future.

²³The title of a sub-section of **Wikinomics**, 122.

²⁴A relatively commonsense walk in the context of page 250 is given in *Quodlibet* 8: "The Dialectic of My Town, Ma Vlast". I wrote it while taking a week to walk around Dublin. It was the week after that amazing 2004 Toronto overdose week of 50 papers that was held to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Lonergan's birth.