F 17 Q Positioning: "A crucial experiment"

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1. Introduction

This short article is an expression of my present positioning, which includes a hope that our gradually increasingly coordinated efforts will be of some value to the community. In fact, it was in a spirit of hope for *community* progress that I began these reflections on a Feast Day of Mary (October 7, 2011), where one of the readings calls our attention to the possibility of devoting ourselves to working/thinking/praying together "with one accord" (Acts 1: 12-14).

However, what could that mean, "with one accord", and how can we do that? For whatever our context and kontext, a normal community problem is that different investigators operate "from within different horizons. The results, accordingly, will not be uniform."[1] Part of my positioning (implicit in [4] and [10] below) is that "the source of this lack of uniformity will be brought out into the open when each investigator proceeds to distinguish between positions … and counter-positions."[2]

This article then is my effort to make a preliminary (descriptive) contribution to that strategy [which is part of the larger (future) task of *functional dialectic*, compactly indicated on p. 250 of Method in Theology.] In particular, I give a list of 20 statements, a sampling, paired so that the 'odds' [1], [3], …, [19] are what I consider to be counter-positional, while the 'evens' [2], …, [20] are expressions of my positioning. I highlight the 'evens' in boldface. The full list is organized as follows: **A - General** [1] – [12]**; B - Christian** [13]' – [16]'**;** and **C - All traditions** [17]' - [20]'**.**

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[1] Method in Theology, p. 250.
[2] Ibid.

Perhaps some of my statements regarding 'Lonerganism' will offend some? But, also part of my positioning is that the issue is OUR survival and progress, US-here-now, an *empirical* challenge requiring "crucial experiment"[3]. And in empirical work, experiment is not about "offense". In any case, I am beginning to see the necessity of positional self-candor within the community. If you disagree with some of my positioning, what is your positioning, and how do we differ? Do you see significant positional gaps revealed by my presentation, or perhaps potential for mutual development? Can we learn from each other? Can we find common ground, or perhaps some new mutually enriching improved shared ground? If reaching some kind of *resolution* [4] is not yet possible, do we need to "agree to disagree" - at least for a time, perhaps with a joke and a patient shared prayer, a "rest-quest for in-some-way-shared enlightenment"? If we do disagree, silence will not be helpful to the community. In order for that disagreement to be fruitful (and not, e.g., a secret that might generate counter-positional under-currents), we need to be candid. What are your positional premises? What is the basis of our disagreement? To what data and rationale do we appeal in evaluating our different positions? Indeed, without this kind of self-exposure, control of meaning in the community suffers, so that positive contributions can regularly be missed, while hidden counter-positional errors can too easily re-circulate undetected. Neither of these options is conducive to community progress! Eventually, then, the full dynamics of *functional dialectic* will be a (highly differentiated) stabilizing (and stable) task (within a yet to be achieved future explanatory context of kontexts).

The reader will observe that [1], [2], …, [12] are essentially identical to what we find in McShane's SGEME seminar article, *Taking a Position*[5]. I add the superscripts prime (') to draw attention to the fact that the extension and any edits to the list are mine. All additional comments also are mine. But, why do I have essentially the same first twelve statements? If we rightly suppose normative (accelerating) adult growth, then gaps between non-elder and elder growth trajectories normatively increase "exponentially", with the meanings of elders increasingly remote to the (even though also accelerating) more junior scholars. But, there still remains the possibility of positions being expressed using similar words with more (or less) compatible meanings. And in fact,

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[3] Ibid, p. 253.
[4] Ibid, p. 252, end of par. 2.
[5] Taking a Position, Functional Specialization Seminars, October 18, 2011,
http://www.sgeme.org/BlogEngine/post/2011/10/18/Taking-a-Position-by-Phil-McShane.aspx

some type of uniformity in position statements should be expected, at least eventually. For as the Tower community matures, basic positionings and emerging differentiations of consciousness will asymptotically converge on a "dynamical positive cone" – a highly differentiated "cone-of-progress" of mutually compatible genetically structured dynamical heterarchies of more and less developed basic positionings. Of course, all of my statements here also are part of my expressed present positioning.

Next, then, to my list of twenty statements, keeping in mind that I intend the 'odds' as counter-positional and the 'evens' as my positioning statements.

2. Positioning Statements

A - General

[1] I believe that metaphysical interest is one of interested observer: it is not intrinsically practical.

[2] I accept existentially Lonergan's suggestion re. implementation as essential to philosophy.

I find that data of consciousness on [2] is directly available. I find that position [1] evidently is self-contradictory: Being involved in any scholarship and discourse, one is learning from and taking advantage of developments, decisions and expressions within the historical community; and by one's discourse and other expressions and actions, one's developments, decisions, expressions and actions are to some extent carried back into the community. Taking position [1] therefore is a performance-contradiction, a practical claim that being practical is not practical. The only way to hold position [1] is to choose to remain silent, which also is self-contradictory.

Position [1] generates a mode of self-centeredness and self-screening that is a dynamic toward fragmentation of self and of community.

[3] I see little reason why philosophic efforts should be twisted into any collaborative structure. I prefer working on my own, in my own interested fashion.

[4] I have begun to see reasons why we need functional collaboration as described by Lonergan. …. for all disciplines.

In particular, I am beginning to see that without *functional dialectic*, expressions and other contributions generally will remain ambiguous, allowing for re-circulating ongoing confusions counterproductive to community progress. See also the last four sentences of the fourth paragraph of my **Introduction** above.

[5] I think that good description, even *haute vulgarization*, is sufficient in philosophic discourse.

[6] I take Lonergan seriously when he stands against "pseudometaphysical mythmaking" (Insight, 528).

I have begun to see the need of "explanatory formulation" … as necessary … for making progress toward intending realities: unity of aggreformic things; unity of aggreformic human organisms; aggregates of aggreformic things; unity of the universe; metaphysical equivalence; the science of metaphysics.

The positioning in [5] pushes one toward a view of knowing that there is a human knowing (and even a human knowing about human knowing) that somehow does not require human insight into phantasms within human aggreformic neuro-chemical consciousness.

The positioning in [5] makes seeking explanations of data of sense (including human expressions) and data of consciousness irrelevant, and blocks one from seeking definitions of real things and aggregates of real things (including human things; communities of human things; and the human-life of the Man-God Jesus – see **B**, below).

The positioning in [5] refers to "good description", but that kind of "description" does not occur within a kontext seeking explanation. Such "good description" therefore means combinations of "elementary description", the "merely nominal" and the "merely verbal".

[7] Lonerganism, as it has moved in the past 50 years, shows progress towards changing culture.

[8] Lonerganism is dishonest in using the name while rejecting Lonergan's program of Cosmopolis.

Was Lonergan mistaken? If so, in what ways, in what respects? Asking questions of Lonergan's work always is possible, and helpful both by way of personal growth and by way of community growth. However, within Lonerganism, there is no expressed open foundational challenge of Lonergan's work. And yet, there is ongoing *silent rejection* of his foundational results. Any scholar or group of scholars is of course being dishonest when using Lonergan's name while deliberately rejecting Lonergan's main achievements -- one of which was his identification of the problem and solution of Cosmopolis.

[9] Lonerganism is working its way successfully towards an individualistic answer to Cosmopolis.

[10] Lonergan's search for an effective Cosmopolis brought him to functional collaboration.

See [4].

[11] Lonergan conferences etc devoted to scattered individualism, is our best option.

[12]' Lonerganism's mode of progress is very troubling.

I see no coordinated appeal to experience (GEM2, Third Collection, p. 141) and no coordinated efforts toward understanding fundamental realities of the human organism and communities of

human organisms; no heuristic heading or orientation seeking explanation; continued rejection of the fundamental relevance of the "sciences of our times", advances in the arts and developing technologies; no coordinated efforts toward collaboration for "cumulative and progressive results" (Method, pp. 4,5); no coordinated or effective outreaching to our struggling world communities (scholarship, sciences, economics, cultures); active "negative support" for Lonergan-students to follow Lonergan's leads on the need for growing toward adequate self-luminous explanatory perspectives in the arts, sciences, mathematics, technologies, economics; no signs of progress toward *effectively* caring for *contemporary global humanity*.

B - Christian tradition

[13]' In Trinitarian theology, the main issues are "spiritual" and doctrinal. The sciences are not essential to theology. In particular, it is not necessary to enquire into emergence and probability, the physics and chemistry of the universe, the chemistry of human history, the science of economic collaboration and global husbandry, the chemistry of Jesus the Man-God, or the chemicality of the Holy Trinity.

[14]' I have begun to see that *psychological analogy* points not merely to a fundamental truth, but that held within "affirmation, negation and eminence", the *analogy* is in fact "a living analogy", a totally intimate existential reality for each-and-all of us, TOGETHER: An eternal unity – the Triune-God-in-us-in-the-Triune-God, … no "separation", but we distinct, created, secondary, metaphysical, intellectual, developing, community, within DYNAMIC COMMUNITY. I have begun to see Trinitarian theology not as about *"mere mystery"* but, through *revelation* and *psychological analogy*, a *focusing of-and-within mystery*, subsuming ALL of metaphysics. I have begun to see the need of growing in a "basic positioning" where theological development fundamentally depends on GEM2 *kataphatic-* reaching-within-faith, "faith seeking understanding", self-luminously, … promoting self-growth in *understanding-and-loving the invisible* – the invisible universe, the invisible human community, the invisible COMMUNITY, the invisible Triune God (two and only two processions; four real relations, three distinct real relations, the missions), the ontological and psychological constitution of Christ.

[15]' Only revealed or doctrinal mysteries are theologically significant mysteries. For example, "Jesus is God", "God is Three Persons", and so on.

[16]' In addition to mysteries that are revealed or doctrinal truths, what is *given* also is mystery and gift: space-time/ABC (Insight, 528), individuality, wonder/desire, insights, inner formulations, benevolent choices. Continuing from [14]', these mysteries are gifts, our "living bridging" … with-within the circumincessions of the Holy Trinity.

In my faith, Jesus is the Word maximally sharing our human experience, is our Living-One-Body-Bridge – adding an existential focus to the doxology, "through Him, with Him, in Him", in which-in Whom we desire and aspire. Our community of members is "intercessionaly" developing within the One-Body-Bridge … with/within/of COMMUNITY.

C - All traditions

[17]' Non-Christian religious traditions have their own dynamics of development and need to be purged of non-Christian myth.

[18]' I find that just as there is the real mystery of "the other", there is the real mystery of "the other tradition". Other religious traditions eventually also will include emergent Towering (functional) collaboration. Within any tradition, once "questioning" and "questioning about questioning" reaches some maturity within GEM2 (Third Collection, p. 141), there will be increasingly globally shared formulations of mystery and common notions of God as "unrestricted understanding", "unrestricted benevolence", … . In that way, whether Christian or non-Christian, mutual enrichments between familiar and even exotic religious traditions will then become normal and regular within a global developing control of meaning within history, within common mystery, within Common Mystery.

[19]' There is no heuristic needed or possible for the total ordering of history and human destiny.

[20]' A heuristic for *total history-eschatology* that includes [4]', [10]', [14]', [16]' and [18]' is the *metagram W3*, "Double You Three"[6].

Note also that [19]' evidently is self-contradictory, so that defending it involves one in performance-contradiction.

3. "With one accord"

I end this short exercise with the hope-prayer that together we begin to make progress in self-positioning - *mystery-private*, but also needed efforts at being *crucially public* - according to the needs and demands of Community Progress, … , "with one accord".

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[6] Since this symbolism is still new for the community, I add the following reference: P. McShane, Ways to get into Functional Collaboration, Functional Specialization Seminars, October 5, 2011, Note 6, http://www.sgeme.org/BlogEngine/post/2011/10/05/Ways-to-get-into-Functional-Collaboration-by-Phil-McShane.aspx