

## Academic Disciplines and Jesus

“Academic disciplines .... do little to advance ....”<sup>1</sup> I quote here from the beginning of *Method*, a turn of the page that should have shocked us all on a first reading in 1972. It certainly did not shock me at all as I struggled with the text and the making of an index at the end of 1971. Indeed, it took me decades to read it with half-decent comprehension. It reminds me of my failure, over thirty years, to read the piece of Joyce’s *Ulysses*, “Deshil Holles Eamus. Deshil Holles Eamus. Deshil Holles Eamus”: connecting the little *s* at the end of Holles with *Eamus* to give a personal challenge: “Round All, Seamus.”<sup>2</sup>

What is meant by academic discipline here? Let me try for a simple lead in to the convention.

*Academic discipline* obviously refers to an area of inquiry, like musicology or psychology: might one add economics and theology? Within the particular area or discipline there are differences of opinion regarding basics and consequences. So, how do they advance, proceed in writing, in research, in teaching, in theses? The various procedures are easily noted in the normal standard published article. One belongs to a school, perhaps, or is out on one’s own. In either case one has a point to make regarding the subject, a point that purports to be novel. Perhaps it connects two views of the meaning of the subject, then one handily writes of “X and Y” on the whole area or a small topic in that area. Or one is within one’s own school, but is pushing

---

<sup>1</sup> *Method in Theology*, 3-4. You notice I skipped a line at the top of page 4: “clearly enough, these approaches to the problem of method.”

<sup>2</sup> See [Cantower 31](#), “Time and Distance: *Feynman I*, chapter 5; *Insight*, chapter 5,” page 31, for details. *Hollis* names a street in Dublin with a maternity hospital at its corner: that part of *Ulysses* is about a birth. One sniffs easily the German *Alles* in the name. *Deshil*, Gaelic, roughly meaning “go round to the right.” See further, my final note 27 below.

what is considered a fresh point about the area as viewed in the school, its history, its applications, its interdisciplinary tentacles, whatever. The writing requires a context, and that context can rarely be presented without references. The references may be to one's own previous work, or to people in the school, or to people in opposition. But names must be dropped if one is to get anywhere.

And here, rather neatly, I bring us to the turn of the first page of *Method's* first chapter. Yes, names must be dropped if one is to get anywhere. But dropped in the other simpler sense.<sup>3</sup>

This is a bold move, of "bolder spirits."<sup>4</sup> It is the move to an established science. I have you with me, now, at the beginning of the second paragraph of this first chapter on *Method*, but I do not wish us to move into the complexity of that paragraph. I wish you rather to backtrack and note that "what counts is the example of the master."<sup>5</sup> I wish you to pause<sup>6</sup> over those words freshly.

First there is the problem that I associate with Lonergan's struggle of 1966 and our conversations, at the time, about it. How might the master begin?<sup>7</sup> In what way does the first paragraph hold of Lonergan?

In what way does the first paragraph hold of Jesus?

---

<sup>3</sup> Names regularly occur only as identifying tags in mature sciences: Feynman Diagrams, Wernike's aphasia.

<sup>4</sup> *Method in Theology*, 3, line 10

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, line 4.

<sup>6</sup> I wish you to pause, indeed, in the life-time manner recommended by the four Appendices of *The Allure of the Compelling Genius of History*. But "what do you want?" — the question of note 8 below — in the nature of pauses, is a core question in your pilgrimage.

<sup>7</sup> I shared such puzzling with him again in 1977, when I had presented the 1944 version of his economics at a Boston workshop, and we later puzzled over his presentation in 1978. In neither case, I think, did we come up with the right strategy: but that is a matter for later HOW questions and essays. In 1965, after his February discovery, he did a fair bit of scribbling, presented accurately with comments in Darlene O'Leary's thesis of 1999, *Lonergan's Practical View of History*. With Darlene's permission, I can e-mail the thesis to anyone interested.

There is, but so so differently in the two cases, the allure of the Master. Let us switch our focus from Lonergan's problem to Jesus' problem. John's presentation of his problem, you may note, puts Jesus in the stance of "academic disciplines" much less than does the other three gospels. In *John* He footnotes less. He turns to his first class, as Lonergan might have done in *Method*, with the simple question, "what do you want?"<sup>8</sup> But only near the end of the Gospel does He get to say what he wants them to want, nudged by Philip's odd question, "Lord, show us the Father; that is all we need."<sup>9</sup>

Then there occurs the dense madness that climbs to the extravagant conversation with the Father of the seventeenth chapter an expression of an effective dynamic involvement in history, "that they may be one."<sup>10</sup>

What Jesus wants them to want is a distant reality, quite beyond John or Aquinas or Lonergan or any of us pilgrims. Indeed, pause over the fullest meaning of "that they might have joy in their hearts in all its fullness."<sup>11</sup> I think now, distractedly, of a video of the elder<sup>12</sup> Leonard Cohen that I listened to this morning. "Dance me to the end of love."<sup>13</sup> The video shows a piece of the film that seeded my prayer of *The Allure of the Compelling Genius of History*: "Grace, Grace, Grace: attune us to the Allure of the Scent of a Nomen."<sup>14</sup> The blind man dances; the lady glows. The ballet dancer touches the

---

<sup>8</sup> *John* 1:38.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 14:8.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 17:11. Note that Lonergan refers to (367) the later occurrence, verse 21, of this desire, as he ends *Method*.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 17:13. My own initial pause over the meaning is in *The Everlasting Joy of Being Human* (Axial Publishing, 2013).

<sup>12</sup> Older folk will recall his success in the sixties. Younger people will know of his recent *Alleluia*. He is now 82, and still on the circuit. There are plenty of videos available on the web. I am indebted to Tom Halloran, a wizard in Oz, for the one referenced in the following footnote.

<sup>13</sup> You can find the video at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEVow6kr5nI>

<sup>14</sup> See, in particular, *Allure* 233, the beginning of the nineteenth chapter, "The Well of Loneliness."

edge of a cliff in the order of the cosmos. And the horses in the video tell us of “that order’s dynamic joy and zeal.”<sup>15</sup>

Tell us? “Tell me, tell me, tell me, elm! / night night! Telemetale of stem or stone. Beside the rivering waters of, hiterandthithering waters of. Night!”<sup>16</sup> Might we come, in these next centuries, to listen tellingly<sup>17</sup> to this telling of a horse, the finality of prime potency in the seed’s womb-cherishing and the foal’s first fumbling steps?

Have I wandered from Jesus giant-minded question, “What do you want?”—that question edging out of Thought?<sup>18</sup> Back I wander to the first words of *Method*: “Thought on method is apt.”<sup>19</sup> A Giant-Minding Willing Yes:<sup>20</sup> the Thought is the

---

<sup>15</sup> My oft-quoted end-phrase of *Insight* 722. It will take millennia to climb, neuromolecularly, out of the warps of Axial times, so that the symphony of humanity’s willingness “wills with that order’s dynamic joy and zeal.” *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 216. The conclusion of Part I.

<sup>17</sup> *Tellingly* refers to the massive task pointed to in note 15. It is a task, of course, pointed to in the conclusion to *Insight*’s chapter 7, in the beginning of chapter 17, and in the book’s Epilogue. The shocking details of that telling and “all that is lacking” (*Insight*, 559) are to emerge only slowly in these next millennia. We have, at present, almost no “sense of the unknown” (title, *Insight* 17.1.1: 555) damage we have done to the molecular clusters of cosmic progress. We need to pause in serious humble contemplative therapeutic refined understanding over the chemistry of these warps, be they pharma or farming, Vientiane or Vatican. They are etched into our neuromolecules. Think now, for instance, of your reading of finality in chapter 15 of *Insight* or in the next sentence above. Are you even slimly tuned to the passion of the big bang that screams in your heart and toes?

<sup>18</sup> The word edging hides the multitude of subtle problems of Jesus Blessed Self-knowing vision, a vision strangely complete yet radically incomplete.

<sup>19</sup> I cannot resist wandering back to the concluding paragraph of my [Posthumus 21](#) essay, “Rewriting and Righting Allurexperiences,” the final essay of essays that are a climb towards cueing and skewing and re-scueing all your experiences. (I omit footnotes; the 1833 Overture reference is perhaps familiar by now). “‘Thought on Method IS Apt.’ I have been heading towards my assertion of that through 21 *Posthumous* essays, indeed through the searchings of the forty three years since my reading the original typescript. It points, in me, to an inner judgment of value, expressed for you in this 1833 Overture that later, then, THEN, can be identified in a section 2 of Foundations as an “*eo magis unum*,” a Trinitarian Spiraling of the contemplative Tower community of later millennia. ‘Is this to be taken literally or is it figure? It would be fair and fine, indeed, to think it no figure.’ ”

<sup>20</sup> The cover of *Allure* images this Yes as the Wholly Frail, and the conclusion to the two page commentary on the cover (*Allure*, i-ii), “The Finding of the Wholly Frail” talks, at the end, of the

fullness of circumincessional joy in the end of Love. But the talk's edge limps in Mediterranean modes, hedged by a natural lack in the beingstalk.

That fullness is indeed apt in thinking the method, the Way. But the fullness is, literally, (infinite)<sup>infinity</sup> remote, beyond the simplicity of "tensor fields"<sup>21</sup> that underpin the waves of cosmic life: it heart-holding "the totality of results."<sup>22</sup> Can we become apt, add-apt, like fumbling foals, our aptitudes to the dark whole of that genetic symphonic totality?<sup>23</sup>

[O]ne may expect the diligent authors of highly specialized monographs to be somewhat bewildered and dismayed when they find that instead of singly following the bent of their genius, their aptitudes, and their acquired skills, they are to collaborate in the light of common but abstruse principles and to have their individual results checked by general requirements that envisage simultaneously the totality of results.<sup>24</sup>

This third HOW essay opens up impossibly here, but my hope is that it attracts people beyond the small original group who took functional collaboration seriously in these last decades, people freshly allured out of Lonerganism by the compelling genius of history, suspecting that they are being allured by Him into loving contemplation.

---

response to His invitation in terms of Molly Bloom's final words in Joyce's *Ulysses*: "yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes."

<sup>21</sup> *Insight*, 603, 3<sup>rd</sup> last line.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 604, line 8.

<sup>23</sup> There is the darkness of evil (See the 25<sup>th</sup> place of *Insight* 19.9: 689) and the darkness of mystery and how they are to be effectively handled by the reversal is lurking in my symbolism of GS + UV: a problem worth mentioning as we skim along. How much of those refinements were luminous to Jesus' grip on the total story of his mystical body? How much was he A Head of his time in the task of conceiving *Comparison* (*Method in Theology*, 250) as ever-revisiting the quest for Jesus' story: "The revisiting is to lead, so so slowly, to a front-thesis on the mystical body, that front thesis eventually to be integrated in the sublated genetic systematics of all such theses through the ages" (P. McShane, *The Road to Religious Reality*, Axial Publishing, 2012, 38). And you are there, in that freshfront thesis, in many ways. Might you climb so so slowly and kataphatically to find that thereness, a *Dasein*, in which "God is not an object"? *Method in Theology*, 342; see *Allure*, 233-35.

<sup>24</sup> *Insight*, 604, lines 3-8.

And this struggle brought to my mind a previous grappling of mine with the problem of beginning a book on method, a book which emerged two years later as *Process: Introducing Themselves to Young Christian Minders*.<sup>25</sup> The idea dawned on me in that summer of 1988—when I knew that I must needs tackle the promised *Process: a Paideiad*<sup>26</sup>—that I might well begin the book with  $W_3$ . And it was, indeed, a bright idea, one that I did not follow then: is it not as obviously useful as putting the periodic table on the inside cover of a grade 11 chemistry text?  $W_3$  gives a pale heuristic video of the dance to the end of love. It also reminds us of Jesus’s talk of the Three as he tangos to Golgotha. It gives us the beginning of a common Christian prayer: “Double You Three in me, in all: Claspings, Cherishing, Calling, Craving, Christing.”

So, now, think of my finding, after decades of folly reading: a fresh reading of “Deshil Holles Eamus” that gave new life to my meaning of *Finnegans Wake*, and a possible title for the 12 or so volumes of Cantowers: *Roun Doll, Home James*.<sup>27</sup> Might you not now read **HOW 3** in some round-tower startled freshness: **HO  $W_3$ !**

**Hang Onto  $W_3$ !**

So let us begin freshly the reverie run past Eve and Adam.

---

<sup>25</sup> I wrote the book on a sabbatical leave in Oxford, 1988- 89 where I assiduously avoided all contact with the academy, but found its librarians wonderfully helpful.

<sup>26</sup> I made this promise in the early 1970s, in the final page (117) of *Wealth of Self and Wealth of Nations: Self-Axis of the Great Ascent*. The title suggested then was the one given above in that final page “Postlude: Prelude to Process: a Paideiad.” The book moved necessarily—somewhat like the first half of *Method in Theology*—towards being more elementary. Video-tapes (20 hours) are available of a television presentation of it.

<sup>27</sup> See note 2 above. There is a long footnote at the end of [Cantower 31](#) (p. 32) about facets of this suggested title, first given on that page.