

Joistings Zero: Ongoing Collaboration

In my most recent perspective the series I am about to begin is about the first words of Jesus in John's Gospel, the dominant question of human history: "What do you want?"¹ It is there in Vedic desire and in ancient African rhythms. But what is most evident is that it is there in you. What is there? The spontaneous orientation, whose spontaneity may well be clouded by the culture's offerings regarding its thematic.

But let us not get into the deep waters of desire here. This is meant to be a brief introduction to this final series. It brings to my mind the first series, the *Cantowers*, that I began on Easter Monday, All Fools day as it happened, in 2002. There I began with Eric Voegelin's final little book's beginning. "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."² But here I begin again for the last time, and could well do so under Voegelin's last title, *In Search of Order*.

The search, of course, has woven through my fifty years of methodology and I shall return to that topic in *Joistings 10*. Here I wish only to orientate that reader in

¹That most recent perspective emerged in the final two days of my August 2005 lectures in the University of British Columbia. The focus of attention then was on the meaning of "I" as used by Jesus and by you, and, in a somewhat Originist mood, I went on to over-interpret the modified statement "And I, if 'I' be lifted up from the earth"(John 12:32). The context was the 13.7 billion year story of matter and earth that give rise to the phantasm 'I' (*watashi wa*, whatever) as it emerges in the reader of John. The cosmic book, open at "I", invites the lift towards the Idea

To those familiar with my Website book, *ChrISt in History*, this reaches deep into the problem of an adequate categorial context, intimated best by bracketing the *abouts* of the text sentence as (about)³. Section 2 of *Joistings I* deals with the topic. *Joistings1*, indeed, was an Introduction to the series, written in the Spring of 2005, but it seemed as well now, after an August conference on functional specialization in Christology, from which emerged the Website book, *ChrISt in History*.

²Eric Voegelin, *In Search of Order*, vol. 5, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1987, 13.

relation to the series of essays that emerged since 2005. Then I began the *Cantower* series of 117 essays, promising one per month till I reached, in a million words, the equivalent of Ezra Pound's 117 *Cantos*. The writing of that series was terminated in February of 2004, through as it happens I was sufficiently ahead to place on the Website the essays right up to this month, September 2005.

Why was the series abandoned? It was part of the search for order, a search that required community, and the offer of community emerged at that stage. The offer and the promise did not in fact blossom, except randomly and also in so far as, first, I pursued that suggested topic myself, secondly, other collaborations emerged. That other collaborations emerged is related to this final series called *Joistings*,³ but I shall return to this presently.

The suggested topic for that first collaboration was that brilliant page of *Method*, page 250. More precisely it was the topic that was taken up in the previous page of the book, "The Structure of Dialect". So, my own effort at collaboration was titled SOFDAWARE, indicating a making aware, at a spectrum of levels, of the Structure OF Dialectic. Does spectrum give a good image, with its suggestion of changing wavelengths, so that a reader at the beginner's end is just not at the same wavelength as those more advanced? But perhaps hierarchic imaging is better, especially in the context of an analogy with serious science. Think, then, of the teaching and learning of physics. One moves up slowly through a first and second year to advanced comprehension of a topic. There are no illusions of short cuts.

Now in the effort to generate awareness of SOFD I climbed through a year devoted to the page, and wrote about 200 pages. Such an awareness could not be shared without a somewhat similar effort, especially since I had, so to speak, a head start. None of the group with which I was working had the required type of leisure. My

³I originally thought of the title in 1993, when I was envisaging a final series, but I was distracted into thinking out and writing larger works. I need hardly spell out the undertones and puns of the title?

efforts, then, carried me towards a relatively solitary perspective on SOFD. No doubt some of my Lonergan colleagues will dispute that: they can do so legitimately only if they devote a like time to the page.

My 200 page effort carried me from 8 SOFDAWARES to a series of 21 essays called *Quodlibets*. The *Quodlibets* continued the drive towards an awareness of SOFD.⁴ But 2/3 rds of the way through I switched attention to another crisis page, this time from *Insight*. People who have been tuned into my work will recognize the number 464 as the regularly-quoted page of the old *Insight* - 489 the new number. The key phrase on the page is "Study of the organism begins...." It is as devastating a page as page 250 in *Method*. Study of the organism can be self-study of the organism that is I, and the I can be an Incarnate God.. The switch related to a collaboration with Alessandra Drage who had the time and energy and who was self-interested in the neurochemical self. Some of the fruits of that collaboration appear in *Quodlibets* 14-18, but perhaps the most evident objectification of our efforts is a later collaboration with the Ontario schoolteacher, John Benton, who faced the adventure of teaching philosophy at the school level. The result has been *Introducing Critical Thinking*.⁵

And other collaborations emerged: with Mark Morelli in setting up a conference on functional specialization, focused by the essay in *Quodlibet* 17; with Sean McEvenue on Biblical meanings, resulting in *Quodlibet* 21.⁶ A broader exchange emerged with Sr. Theresa Insook Kim's challenge to reach for a new kataphatic spirituality, and that

⁴The word *awareness* hides all the tricky meanings mentioned in my comment above - in note 1 - on the shades of meaning of *about*. One might find it interesting to track back meanings here, Old English or German: *gewaer*, *waer*, and then move forwards in fantasy. There are degrees of caution, vigilance, that are possible for human consciousness in history.

⁵John Benton, Alessandra Drage and Philip McShane, Axial Publishers, Cape Breton, 2005.

⁶More on the background in *Joistings I*. *Quodlibet* 17, titled "The Origin and Goal of Functional Specialization" was distributed early to set the tone of the meeting, a very successful one.

exchange led to the beginning of this final series, for that search is the main dynamic of the next eight essays.⁷ But it also led to a richer perspective on collaboration, the one that emerged in *Joistings 8*, “Recycling Satisfaction”. Might this be a new stimulus towards the collaboration strangely longed for by that solitary Lonergan?⁸

But on the whole my reach for collaboration was unsuccessful. Should I return to the solitary climbing of the Cantowers?⁹ Such a return seemed to me to be regressive: the shifting of present culture forward needs collaboration, or should I say collusion?¹⁰ The dynamics of history points towards the emergence of social orders that imitate the interpersonality of the divine.¹¹ It is indeed part of the dynamics of feminism’s reach.¹²

⁷Joistings 4-8 were especially related to sister Theresa’s work. But they are also a key to the direction of the Joistings as a whole. We desperately need new patterns of contemplation that focus us on and in the question What [is that not what we are?]

⁸I think of the Lonergan of summer 1953, typing in the extreme solitude of his sixth-floor room in the Regis College of Bayview Avenue, Toronto, the second-last section of the final chapter of *Insight*, which contains 29 occurrences of *collaboration*.

⁹Returning to the Cantowers was a definite option, but it involved a solitary climb as well as compact expression of the results of that climb - especially in the zone of contemporary physics. The compact expression of functional collaboration suffers from the same potential flawed reading as that within physics, a *haute vulgarization* that would not genuinely advance either education or scientific collaboration. This needs to be considered at length later in Joistings, thus sublating the projected Cantower 54: “Quantumelectrodynamics, Pedagogy, Popularization”. But the key problem is the task of generating a community of serious metatheory. It is illustrated by the fate of Aquinas’ solitary climb, which should not be repeated for Lonergan in these global days and needs.

¹⁰I am referring here to my favorite parable, “the Unjust Steward”, where his cunning is praised. It is a much commented on parable of Luke: see, for bibliography, Richard Dormandy, “Unjust Steward or Converted Master?”, *Revue Biblique* 2002, 512-527. Whatever the twists of interpretation it is clear to me that the children of this world put more energy into thinking out the sale of soap than the children of light do sailing salvation.

¹¹The reality and the imitation is the topic of *De Deo Trino II. Pars Systematic*, Gregorian University, 1964, especially in *Asserta 14 et 18*. The translation is to appear in *Complete Works*, volume 12.

¹²Olive Skene Johnson, *The Sexual Spectrum*, Raincoast Books, Vancouver, 2004, 51.

Might there be a corrective there to mistaken rugged individualism? At all events, Molly Bloom has a point: "I don't care what anybody says it'd be much better for the world to be governed by the women in it."¹³

What do you think? "What do you think?'. When a man hears that question, he believes he is being asked to make a decision, whereas a woman believes it is asking her to explore the issue in an open-minded way."¹⁴ But I am getting into deep, if not hot, water here. Whereas my original intention in writing this Preface to the *Joistings* series was to point in elementary fashion to my own possibility of collaboration, the collaboration symbolized by that final *Quodlibet*, the collaboration that pushed me into *Joistings* 1-8.

Obviously, I would hope that such interchanges would lead eventually to the emergence of a serious effort at beginning functional specialization, but I must be content for now with foundational reaching in any zone. That foundational reaching need not be advanced: indeed it could well be in the context of the new deceptively simple book, *Introducing Critical Thinking*. But you may well, and even if not advanced, be nursing a \$64 question that needs to be aired. You may simply want private pointers: then no immediate need for a *Joisting*. But you may also have a larger ask to ground: then the interchange could push forwards in the style of *Quodlibet* 21.

It is clear to me that without open interchange, and that also with other zones of inquiry, not just inner-philosophic dialogue, Lonerganism will grow to be somewhat parallel to Aristoteleanism and Thomism, but now including a nominalism of self-attention. In the present series I hope to counter that helpfully, indeed efficiently, by

¹³James Joyce, *Ulysses*, Penguin, 1986, 778. In the book cited in the previous note the second chapter begins with that wonderful remark of Chesterton (*The Napoleon of Notting Hill*), "men are men, but Man is a woman".

¹⁴Johnson, *op. cit.*, 52.

various strategies of linguistic feedback¹⁵. There are layers of such strategies, starting with blunt interjections, best illustrated for me by an evening conversation of three of us: two mathematicians and Lonergan. The two mathematicians were heavily into obscurities about metamathematics when Lonergan interjected, “Do you guys know what you are talking about?”! But the linguistic feedback can and will become much more sophisticated, print and other media talking back to us, as it were, about our mystery and our muddles.

A luminous conviction about that emerged in me, providentially, when I was finishing Cantower 33, the Lonergan centennial Cantower of December 2004. It was re-expressed in “Obstacles to Metaphysical Control.”¹⁶ The conviction was there in various degrees of luminosity for decades before, but now it seemed both more needed and more plausible. It involves the sublating of *Insight* and *Method* into what may be called *General Metaphysics*. That really was a central goal of the *Cantowers*, but entwined into the goal of reaching, particularly within modern physics, into the *Opera Omnia* of both Aquinas and Lonergan, thus seeking especially to arrive, and to bring others to arrive, at some explanatory thematic of “our destiny”¹⁷ that would lift eschatology beyond where Aquinas left it. But the more integral aspect of the goal is now the development of a type of expression that would tune us to the difficulty of our searching and rescue us from pressures of general bias and haute vulgarization that could delay indefinitely Lonergan’s project, and history’s, of shifting humanity to the second time of temporal subjectivity.

I shall have more to say about that project in *Joisting* 10, which relates to the secondary agenda of pushing towards an operative metaphysics of education. It is not really a separate agenda - metaphysics is history becoming luminous, educated,

¹⁵The notion originated with Lonergan. See note 34 on page 88 of *Method in Theology*.

¹⁶*Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies*, **24**, (2006).

¹⁷See *Method in Theology*, 292.

elevated,¹⁸ about its own agenda - but that is a complex topic best left to the later essay.

Indeed, I had best halt this introduction abruptly here, lest my main point be missed. I would hope that there are readers of a new generation, especially with a feminist bent, who would reach out for a collaborative turn. No doubt I continue thus to be an annoyance to Lonergan students of other generations.¹⁹ It is, for instance, annoying to be regularly told that generalized empirical method, as practiced by Lonergan throughout his adult life, is not philosophy but philosophy of. It is an annoyance to have identified dialogue with other views as something on the edge of serious metaphysics, analogous at times to astronomy discussing planetary motion with the flat-earth society. And so on.

It is certainly annoying - and here I return to the first sentence question, "What do you want?" - to have pointed out discomfortingly that many of those interested in Lonergan's work seem uninterested in that first question of John's Jesus. Aquinas attended to it with brilliant introspection in the first 17 questions of the Second Part of the *Summa*. Waiter's ask it, as well as Jesus who waits. Slow metascientific attention to the meaning of that question in oneself is the road to *Praxis*, to the future, to functional specialization as "a specialized auxiliary ever ready to offset every interference with

¹⁸I am indebted here to Patrick Byrne's reflections in *Analysis and Science in Aristotle* (New York, SUNY Press, 1997), 23-25. One might think of education as up-loosing, which connects with the original Greek meaning of analysis. For a further context, see "Elevating Insight: Space-Time as Paradigm Problem, *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies*, **19** (2001), 203- 229.

¹⁹But might I appeal to a sense of humour about our general unpreparedness for Lonergan's and history's challenge? For instance, my push for precise complex terminology might be compared to the odd behavior of Chesterton's Irishman mentioned below, but there is nothing funny about the brutal destructiveness, the serial killing, of rich pretentious descriptiveness, with which I am at odds. "A Dublin tradesman printed his name and trade in archaic Erse on his cart. He knew that hardly anybody could read it: he did it to annoy. In his position I think he was quite right" (G.K.Chesterton, *George Bernard Shaw*, Bodley Head, London, 1961, 16.

intellect's unrestricted finality".²⁰ Lack of that self-attention leads to a verbal embeddedness in Lonergan's four transcendental slogans that cuts us off from the adventure of history's loneliness.

²⁰*Insight*, 726[747]. The context is a comment on hope in that final 31st place of chapter 20.