

Reviewing Michael McCarthy's Book and Reviewing Reviewing

Michael's book, *Authenticity and Self-Transcendence*¹ has received very positive reviews from the Lonergan community. To that I do not need to add. My interest is in another type of reviewing, a type that would help us all to crawl into functional collaboration. I already had a shot at writing about that in an essay in honor of Fr. Brendan Lovett,² where I dealt in particular with reviewing, in a new style, the first volume of Sarah Coakley's three volumes on the Trinity.³ Here I invite us forward less complexly to review what we mean by reviewing.⁴

Although he does not say so explicitly, Michael's book can be seen as belonging to Communications in the category of C₉,⁵ not then a study within communications, but

¹ University of Notre Dame Press, 2015. Referred to below simply as McCarthy.

² "[For the Joy Set Before Us of Effective Field-fostering Reviewing](#)" was published in the Festschrift special edition of *Himig Ugnayan*, A Theological Journal of the Institute of Formation and Religious Studies (IFRS).

³ Sarah Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self. An Essay 'On the Trinity'*, Cambridge University Press, 2013.

⁴ Having finished this essay, it seems good to add this footnote, giving the 'less complex' in decent simplicity. Suppose, or imagine that you are trying to be in some particular functional specialty. Re-view a book, a conference, or indeed anything, in a serious creative search for something that is worth building into the present best version of your own attempted specialty. Think, for example, of Lonergan reviewing *Method in Theology*, finding - on page 250, line 5 - the claim, "it is history in the style of Burckhardt rather than Ranke," seeing and being seized by its recycling significance for his foundational writing, and rewriting *Method in Theology*. See further, note 16 below. Or you could review my *Lonergan Gatherings 15* title and realize that it needs the lift of my usual bracket-strategy to Reviewing Reviewing Reviewing, (Reviewing)³. Moreover, this particular creative reviewing can be done in any specialty, with a consequent personal and communal climb - think of C_{xx} - to a new luminosity within that specialty, one that spreads through cycling. I shall deal with the heuristics of (reviewing)³ more fully in the following essay, there illustrating better the need for the shift to the context of a genetic core to hermeneutics, and facing the task of reviewing an actual Lonergan Gathering, *The Lonergan Philosophical Society* meeting of 2015.

⁵ In my work cited in the next note - referred to later as *Allure* - chapter 16, "Communications and Metaphysics as Science" deals with a town and gown output of the collaborate scientific

coming forth from that functional specialty.⁶ “My hope is that these essays will serve as a bridge between Lonergan and a much broader contemporary audience.”⁷ Whether this hope is realized, that is a matter of, say, the next decade’s varieties of outreach.⁸ Is Lonergan to come out of the narrow world of his disciples and weave into the larger flow of global concern? There McCarthy and I share hope, however different our approaches are.

Here I am not going to comment on his approach, or of the massive erudition of his essays and of his dialectic sweep through interpretation and history. I am interested in the audience that I presume to have here, not then Michael’s eventual audience but the Lonergan audience, indeed the audience that is to represent the hope expressed compactly in the section of his book that talks of functional specialization.⁹

My interest is focused by the same question that dominated my earlier musings on a new type of reviewing: “Is **this** worth recycling?” where **this** refers to some event, or interpretation, or history, or book or whatever.¹⁰ Those familiar with my previous

work, an 8-by-8 matrix of functional conversations under the general categorial symbol C₉. The key diagram is on *Allure* 188.

⁶ I would note that there is nothing offensive in this locating of McCarthy’s work. My own work of 2015, *The Allure of the Compelling Genius of History*, Axial Publishing, 2015, is the same class of effort, a popular outreach to an audience within Lonergan studies.

⁷ McCarthy, viii.

⁸ My hope is that there will be the effective organization of functional cycling and outreach that has been my topic all along. This relates to the effectiveness of Michael’s book. Its directedness to a broader culture can be mediated by Lonergan people in manners that I touch on skimpily below. That mediation will generate a feed-back dynamic that I have written about often previously, one that would relocate Michael’s work in the rich effective genetic tradition that is to emerge from our weaving our way into a functional collaboration that sublates profoundly the canons of hermeneutics of chapter 17 of *Insight*. Obviously, I am here on the edge of reviewing, in the new sense, Michael’s work in his earlier chapters. See further notes 15, 17, 18, 21 and 22.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 301–10.

¹⁰ The primary reference of the key question is to functional research, but it weaves its way forward into all the specialties. Indeed, the objective of the new philosophic culture is to make the question and the quest a global ethos, whether one is dealing with the cycles of fracking or the re-cycling of Thomas Aquinas.

struggles with this question will have a sense of its power and range, but even a beginner can suspect the manner in which the question can give direction to thinking and reading. Its primary previous discussion has been with regard to functional research, and there I used the parallel with research physics, reading screens or data-reports.¹¹ As it happens, a casual conversation today with my wife, Reverend Sally, gives me another. Talking about her strategies of listening to odd people¹² she remarked “you have to listen for the gem.” Whether one is attending to particle data or to a flow of words, one has to listen for the anomalous, suggestive, gem. It is only a possible gem, as my wife and the research physicist know only too well. Humbly, each risks the stand, “this is worth recycling.” The difference for our consideration here of our reviewing and of Lonergan’s bright insight of 1965, is the lifting out of randomness the process of recycling. That is the X-Factor,¹³ the structure of a recycling. It is the X that Lonergan wrote of in hope and vagueness in *Insight* as *Cosmopolis*; it is the X of *Method in Theology*; it is the X that Michael McCarthy treats of compactly in pages 301–10 of *Authenticity and Self-Transcendence*, and that I treat of at length in another popular mode in *The Allure of the Compelling Genius of History*.

So I end my fifteen-essay appeal for a turn to functional collaboration in some degree of simplicity. Either one reviews the past in an orderly fashion “yielding cumulative and progressive results,”¹⁴ or one does so haphazardly, with random results in an

¹¹ Two chapters of *Allure* deal with functional research: 6, “Research Common Sense and its Subject” and 9, “Research and the Notion of Judgment.” It was previously the topic of first ten essays of the *FuSe* series.

¹² First United Church In Vancouver is older than the city. It is now the center of a downtown ‘drug and drink’ zone, and shelters and feeds members of that community. Obviously, the Church’s congregation is filled with oddities. The Church’s story is told by Bob Burrows: *Hope Lives Here: A History of Vancouver’s First United Church*, Harbour Publishing B.C., 2010.

¹³ “The X-Factor” notion and heuristic was introduced at the bottom of page 225 of *Allure*. Yes, it refers to the television talent show, but broadens its reach to our global blinded human talents for magnificent new achievements.

¹⁴ *Method in Theology*, 4. Italics in text.

endless mesh of progress and decline.¹⁵ The orderliness has two faces. There is the functional face, which divides up the reviewing of “the data of any sphere of human living, e.g., simply as experience, understanding, judgment,”¹⁶ and that in two phases.¹⁷ Then there is the systematic face: one brings to the reviewing the best available systematic opinion of the day.¹⁸ Are these two faces of reviewing not worth importing into the random goings-on of Lonergan studies?

Both faces at present belong to the X, and we have to push into the practice in order to have data for grasping these faces, the functional and the systematic.¹⁹ One can begin with any book, any event, and find the flaws in one’s functional focus or one’s systematic perspective. My own book, *The Allure of the Compelling Genius of History*, can be considered as a finding ten pages of Michael’s worth recycling,²⁰ and making that point in a popular mode as he does at length for authenticity and self-transcendence in the rest of his book. Might you pick up on his index e.g. under

¹⁵ There is here a deep problem of hope, indeed Christian hope: its personal problem for the thinker is expressed in my existential question, familiar no doubt by now but worth repeating: “Do you view humanity as possibly maturing – in some serious way – or just messing along between good and evil, whatever you think they are?” (P. McShane, *The Everlasting Joy of Being Human*, Axial Press, 2013, 77).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 364-5. Note, however, that I turn the sentence back to front, and perhaps outside in.

¹⁷ Neither McCarthy nor Lonergan do justice to the second phase, each for different reasons. The problem of conceiving an adequate heuristic of the second phase lies, to a great extent, in missing the optimistic *leaning-forward* orientation of the first phase summarily expressed in note 15, but expressed more fully in my *Futurology Express* (Axial Press, 2013) and in *Allure*. In simple helpful symbolism, our stage in history is one of dealing badly with a tadpole without have a frog on the horizon.

¹⁸ On genetic systematics there is chapter 15 of *Allure*, “Systematics and the Elements of Metaphysics.” The tadpole image of the previous note helps, or there is the image and attitude expressed in the title of my Cantower 2, “Sunflower Speak to Us of Growing.”

¹⁹ It is massively important to struggle towards a genetic heuristic ethos here. Think of yourself as Galileo – or better Leonardo da Vinci – reaching, in relative blindness, for ways forward towards modern physics. This struggle is related to a battle with an axial superego that holds us to the comfortable imprinting of safe samenesses of recurrence schemes, be they schemes of daily doings, of automation, of education, of world politics.

²⁰ See note 9. But clearly I am pointing to a fuller creative recycling of Michael McCarthy’s effort. Such recycling would be paradigmatic of the lifting forwards of the creative work, during the past seventy years, on Lonergan’s pointings.

Nietzsche or *Kant*, and see if his leads are worth functional recycling? One can thus begin to recognize functional work: has he quoted adequately and properly; is his effort one of interpreting unapplied meaning or effected meaning? : so one sees and may seize the value of the first three specialties.²¹ But there is also the humble recognition of a defective viewpoint, an absence in oneself of an up-to-date system, and maybe even a suspicion that that recognition could seed the climb to locating *Kant* or *Nietzsche* in the genetic context²² that Lonergan pitched at us as a heuristic need in the autumn of 1953.

²¹ But the huge effort pointed to in note 15 must be borne in mind, an effort that must bring forth a culture of minding and a C₉ ethos of its presence. The difficulty of the bringing forth is illustrated discomfortingly in the [FuSe](#) series of essays. In particular, the distinction hinted at above in the compact phrase “unapplied meaning and effected meaning” must emerge from shadowy vagueness into a clear operative distinction between interpretation in the second functional specialty and the interpretation that is history. Indeed, the climb is towards a luminosity regarding set of 37 generic operative distinctions of the meaning of *interpretation* that is hinted at in the diagram on page 188 of *Allure*.

²² The challenge has been articulated in the present set of notes, indeed, compactly more suggestively than in *Allure*. Might we begin to fantasize about the effective sublation of the canons of hermeneutics by an omnidisciplinary global functional collaboration? The key piece for sublation is the paragraph that I name 60910 on the turn of page 609 of *Insight*, a piece written in 1953. More on this in the following essay: see note 4 above.