

## Q. 34 Some strategies of Advancing towards Functional Specialization

Q. 34 “After compiling the two lists, I see that they are not really two. In fact I moved some points from one list to the other, and I could just as easily move them back. Is not FS 8 lurking in performances and essays written by students? Is not the whole set of specialties hidden in the rewriting of high school and undergraduate texts as well as future rewritings and performances of *Insight*?” [p.7, Q.31]

A 34 of the many options for answering this complex of questions and suggestions, it eventually seemed to me best to focus on a single suggestion of James, the suggestions under D and B in my re-labeled list. My labels of the fourteen points of his two lists as A to N fits in with his suggestion that the two lists intertwine. In so far as other people join in our searchings I would ask that we stay with my labeling. Before adding my comments.

Here is the relevant piece of the Duffy Text, to save us going back to Q. 32.

“I do not have a magic solution to the mess that we are in, but I do have some suggestion about changing the ethos of gatherings:

- A. *Exerto crede*. Yes, but we need analogies, for example the story of the family on vacation.<sup>1</sup> Would it be useful to tell such stories? Maybe act out the parts?
- B. Review essays, articles, even books with questions in mind:
  - 1. What FSs does this suggest?
  - 2. Does this deserve cycling? Maybe a part? Why? Why not?

C Prepare short, one-to-two page papers on what I think merits cycling in CWL

D Take a humble shot at narratively positioning myself in a footnoteless monologue regarding the “level of the times”

E Reports of teaching or pastoral experiences, frustrations, doubts, etc. and how these experiences intimate sets and sequences of differentiated consciousness

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<sup>1</sup> A Spanish version of the story is available at: <http://eltoquehumano-humanistas.blogspot.mx/2011/11/vacaciones-familiares-en-acapulco-una.html>

F Encounter groups<sup>2</sup> of those teaching: What are we doing? How is it going? What kind of “teacher trickery” is required if we are to survive unlivable academic life? What are a small, doable step to move from “filler” to something filling and satisfying.<sup>3</sup>

G Encounter groups of those directing theses: What can I do to help get my graduate students (and myself!) get in tune with timely differentiations of roles and tasks?

H Self-interpret a teaching practice, a text, a publication with a friendly eye on reversal<sup>4</sup>

There are other possibilities, relating to the possibility of promoting the very slow occurrence of self-appropriation through a struggle with “spirobics,” if not the exercises of *Insight*, then simpler exercises. (see *Method*, 7 note #2, also the long paragraph on the middle of page 260):

I Garden, campus, or zoo (*Method*, 83) walkabouts, followed by sharings, perhaps including a “show and tell” of heuristics;<sup>5</sup>

J Performances of teaching day #1 or day #2 in some area, be it algebra, chemistry or economics; feedback from the audience on the GEMness of such performances;

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2 F. Crowe writes of encounter groups, challenging and being challenged to self-scrutiny, and the un-imagine-ability of inviting colleagues to participate in a discussion where the spirit of the meeting would be self-revelation in *The Lonergan Enterprise* (Cowley, 1980), 92-93. In this same work he wonders if a “great silence” would occur if many were infected by Lonergan’s breakthrough (39) to a division of tasks and roles that includes “an Augustinian confession of what we have been, of the past that has made us what we are” (91). There very well might be a profoundly axial reason to maintain silence. I opt for helping each other dance to a different tune, holding hands the way pre-school kids do when they cross the street, or when they sing and play at recess.

3 In my experience teaching philosophy, both in the US and in Mexico, I have seen and spoken with students who wonder if I “have a clear and distinct idea about what precisely I am doing” (MiT, 137). Well, I don’t! The Spanish phrase for the undifferentiated mess, not just in philosophy but pretty much across the humanities curriculum, is “de relleño,” which means a “filler” or “stuffing.”

4 “I am interpreting my talking of 1977, and puttering around with my sorry story of presentations of thirty years after that. I am musing about reversing my presentational position.” FuSE 18, “Ways to Get Into Functional Collaboration,” available at: <http://www.philipmcschane.ca/fuse-18.pdf>

5 Last term I did this with a group of M.A. students in an education program. The assignment was to somehow symbolize one of their students. It was interesting and revealing how they/we represent/image our students. One of my students, a high school teacher of statistics, came up with a diagram marvelously unintelligible to the rest of the group!

K Sharing essays written for students (or colleagues) that invite and cajoling self-appropriation;

L Smaller sessions of those involved in teaching, divided by level/age, asking: “How might I change my teaching?”

M 50-minute classes and appropriate homework assignments, then participants go back to their rooms and try them; next day we compare notes!

N Song and dance, joke sessions, poetry recitals: If “explanation does not give man a home” (CWL 3, 570), much less does pseudo-explanation and post-systematic chatter (*Method*, 304). Should we be dancing more, and speaking less? “You should be dancing, yah / You should be dancing, yah” (Bee Gees)

The existential problem with the first list is that it requires an assent to the first two pages of *Method in Theology*, or a dissent: “Theology is just as successful as chemistry. And I have found evidence of progress in *Theological Studies* in the last 50 years.”

The existential problem with the second list is that the “scaffolding of mathematics, science, and common sense” (CWL 3, 20) of a “sufficiently cultured consciousness” is quite a tall order for those who were not fortunate enough to learn enough math and science to really read chapter one of *Insight* ... or page one!

After compiling the two lists, I see that they are not really two. In fact I moved some points from one list to the other, and I could just as easily move them back. Is not FS 8 lurking in performances and essays written for students? Is not the whole set of specialties hidden in the rewriting of high school and undergraduate texts as well as future rewritings and performances of *Insight*?”

Thank you James: others will, I hope, follow upon various pointers, not just here but in practice.

I must preface my comments by nudging us to take seriously the two paragraphs near the end that both begin with “The existential problem”. So I move to the concrete strategy of dealing with the cluster of existential problems, and I do so not just here but in the rest of my “Duffy” comments in Q/A 35, 36 and 37. My comments on D relate to that, and the pointing in and to B connect with strategies surrounding D.

Let me repeat D:

D. Take a humble shot at narratively positioning myself in a footnoteless monologue regarding the “level of the times”

Why do I focus on D? Because, while all Jame’s suggestions are relevant, my own present strategy is to draw attention to one zone, one problem, one neglected text of Lonergan, one central task per se of Dialectic but indeed a task for anyone who takes his cultural invitation seriously. That is my preference and my focus, in this first year of my Campaign. I wish to get people, especially my colleagues of the next generation to me in Lonergan studies, to come out in the open in meeting the 1833 Overture. Moreover, I wish that openness to be further focused: what do you think effectively of Lonergan’s suggested structure of collaboration.

Perhaps I should say, need say, no more here? But, alas, the saying has to be loud and weird if it is to be effective. So, these next three Q/A may strike people as indeed weird, indeed downright unchristian. I am about to go into attack. Duffy asks me, among other things, to muse over Boston’s regular workshop, and the forthcoming Workshop in Jerusalem. I do so, mercilessly, in Q/A 35 and QA 37. Will those attending or planning or writing for those gatherings react to my bluntness? They may not even read these Q/A or if they read them they keep silent, hoping to slide by, byebye 1833 Overture, byebye functional collaboration. And I would note – nudge nudge! – that while getting them to break their silence and condemn my outrage and my suggestion that they should collaborate is certainly my problem, might it not become yours? At least you might draw attention to my ravings, with innocent neutrality, by remarking on some strategic occasion, “Did you read that crazy stuff McShane is writing about Lonergan Conferences?”

Now to B:

B. Review essays, articles, even books with questions in mind:

What FSs does this suggest?

Does this deserve cycling? Maybe a part? Why? Why not?

Q/A 36 includes my integrated effort to illustrate B. It is integrated with my focus in that I review, in a developed context which you can have a shot at sharing, an essay by a brilliant and leading Lonergan scholar, Fred Lawrence, who is also a major influence in structuring the Boston Workshop. Might I get him so change his mind about that structure? Might I embarrass him to change it in 2014, or to plan differently – for he has, I suspect, a big part in that – the Jerusalem Gathering of

2013? Might I get him to take seriously the doctrine of Lonergan's 1833 Overture?  
"Doctrines that are embarrassing should not be mentioned in polite company  
(*Method*, 299). For me, the time for politeness is long past.