

Q. 41: Can such comparative work swing into cyclic functional work?(Q. 38,pg. 1)

A. 41. The answers 38 - 40 have added sophistications to the norms of comparative work, yet, strangely, in tackling this present question I can slip back into simpler suggestions. I have insisted that we do not understand WHAT functional collaboration is: one of the handicaps of its implementation in the 1970s was the commonsense bias of disciples which deluded them into thinking they understood Lonergan's brilliant suggestion, indeed understood it sufficiently to reject it by warping simplistically its operative potential, turning it from a long-term potential of omnidisciplinary global "cumulative and progressive results" of village progress to short-term lone-ranger distinctions of topics or filings.

Breaking with that short-sighted arrogance is our present task, and my answer to the question posed is a simple effective YES. The heuristic notion of an "effective yes" is not a familiar one. Indeed, its WHAT can be claimed to be as elusive as the WHAT of functional collaboration: it has to do with the full intellectual conversion that I introduced in Q/A 36. But let us leave that aside so that we can glimpse a simple meaning to YES. We are, then, rambling here in C<sub>9</sub>, rescuing *haute vulgarization* with a here-now push for an effective bent, bending.

I begin by recalling the bent introduced in the first Posthumous essay, "this is worth recycling"! The bent, I insist, is massively difficult to envisage adequately. But let us think of it in terms of a Lonergan conference of papers, the usual mess of effete disconnected presentations. Within the mess there are some contributions that, were we to pause on the final day and vote (secretly of course!), about recycling, we could come up with a weighted list of these, "this"-es, and cut it off at the top five or ten. What would **this, these**, be? They, it, could be the presentation of odd data, or of an interpreter's fresh view, or of a progressive movement in some country or village or academic institution, or of a new poise on glocal kindliness.<sup>1</sup>

Here, **THIS** is to be, or I should say, **THESE** are to be, messy comparisons such as have been our topic in these four questions, made less messy in so far as there

---

<sup>1</sup>You notice my sweep through the first four specialties?

might be – through honest conference chat – a lift, before departing to our caves, towards luminosity in their regard, in the regard of **THEM**. I avoid detail here: I wish to give an optimistic four-page answer. So, I simply, at least in the text, say that the regard is to be felt as genetic.

Is it not possible, thinly probable, that a majority of the conference members would feel this way, feel the sway, feel **this** way? But here's the sad problem. "this is worth recycling", but, NIMBY! - not in my back yard. We return from our conferences back to the yard-stuck of our usual concerns. Functional collaboration? Hey ho: how about collaboration?! We need some heroines<sup>2</sup> who have taken note of where the busy male has got us in these millennia, in these fifty years of Lonergan studies! "What will count is a perhaps not-numerous center" is a sad Lonergan statement on the end-page of *CWL* 4. It has, no doubt been read by all of you without disapproval: but what of with an effective yes? The so-lonely yes of February 1965 to *Insight* that became a personal grip on cultural feasibility in Lonergan's own minding a full eleven and a half years after he typed his last sentence of *Insight's* 1500 typed pages?

So, yes, my questioners, it is possible in my stand, but are you there, among the few, like Molly Bloom in the mess of being bedded down with Leopold upside down? "heart going like mad and yes I Said yes I will Yes."<sup>3</sup>

Could it work? Yes, if only we bowed to, diagrammed out, Lonergan's dream.<sup>4</sup> You can't do it without a diagram, sez Lonergan, talking of the world of Jesus, "in which are symbolically represented all the various elements of the question along with all the connections between them."<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> You may like to revisit *Cantower* 4, on heroines.

<sup>3</sup> The conclusion of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. It ends Molly's forty-page stop-less bed-speech, spoken over the pillowed day-walked feet of Leopold.

<sup>4</sup> Bernard Lonergan. *His Life and Leading Ideas*, 161, 163.

<sup>5</sup> *The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, *CWL* 7, 151.

But now, please, a simple diagram for starters, the image of a mustard seed asking to grow towards a tree, the finality of being standing one-legged in your back yard. “there is such a thing as progress, and its principle is liberty.”<sup>6</sup>

That simple diagram image of growth invites us to compare, in vigorous effectiveness, the contexts and contents of compared viewpoints. The vigour comes from the mad heart, bent uncommonsensibly, on changing history: “for common sense is unequal to the task of changing history.”<sup>7</sup> Commonsense Loneranism has failed to change anything of consequence in fifty years.

At all events does the starting road not become now commonsensically apparent? We have to stop going it alone with the pretense of community in annual conferences. We have to put two and two together, compared A and B, compared C and D, etc in a genetic line-up, and that requires that we put the mess of us together, a bucket circle in a Roman fire, fiddles put aside.

I am dodging details, but they are available elsewhere, although they go beyond the present optimism and invitation. We need, for this humble start, some commitment to a better shot at interpretation: a for-the-present adequate grip on what A or B or C or... mean regarding reading the past and the future. The context of our grip is poor and to be luminously admitted as thus defective: it is to be self-appreciated as a patchy genetic collection of meanings strung out in a faint heuristics of such meanings in history.<sup>8</sup>

We envisage, next, that such meanings, **in so far as they are effective**, can lift our presently-shabby story of ongoing meanings.

That lift of the story provides the more competent with some stuff for *Assembly* towards a better assessment of what to do next.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> *Insight* chapter 7, the beginning of section 8.4, when we are invited to begin to sniff out the characters of the Cosmopolis of Collaboration.

<sup>7</sup> *Insight*, 253.

<sup>8</sup> On the issue of ongoing meaning and effective meaning section 4 of *FuSe* 10, “Contexts of Functional Interpretation” could be useful.

<sup>9</sup> *Assembly* ends *Method*, 249. 250 points to ‘what to do next’, what you might do next, personally, in some shabby but most fruitful fashion. What has been going on in Loneranism and its conferences, and what is my stand on those goings-on?

I thus skim through three specialties as a plea for a new<sup>10</sup> preliminary sense of the potentially effective division of labor in our caring for history. It is no more magical, as a stumbling of the pen, than was the stumbling towards the first pin factory. It can start with that little honest suspicion about some lift needed in our papers and theses and courses that at present foment dated-style comparisons.

Of course, there can be the larger optimism and the better statistics of success if we note that we don't have to wait for the results of the next conference to move from "sitting on our hands"<sup>11</sup>: imagine thinking ahead constructively and collaboratively towards a conference so that what emerge as individual contributions are already tuned towards the humble recycling that is to blossom, in later millennia, into an integral omnidisciplinary global street-sweeping and foot-lighting?

---

<sup>10</sup> I sketched the move towards a new perspective on the forward specialties in *The Road to Religious Reality*. Some sketching of the lift of the heuristics of the first four specialties occurred in the *FuSe* essays.

<sup>11</sup> Crowe's phrase, *Theology of the Christian Word*, 149.