

“Q. 5 : what you have been talking about seems very close to the Halifax Conference topic of the second day: “Lonergan Studies as Faulty Research and Communications”. Perhaps you could give us some leads on this to get us started on that effort?” (Bob Henman).\

A.5: (June 3) Yes, some leads, and a first lead would have me go back to the final paragraph of the previous answer, an answer to Tom Halloran’s question. I might say, “not that you and I need reminding of the point,” but that would be wrong. Those asking questions at the moment are people who have been thinking for a decade about the tricky problems of “telling” and of adult growth. But we, even after a decade, - I too -, need constant re-minding of this strange shift from this disoriented culture.

I have been at this searching of functionality since 1966. Crowe’s book *Theology of the Christian Word. A Study in History*, was a great push forward in this area. *Cantower 38* (see especially section 4) was my serious heavy re-entry into the work, which I had admired from the late 1970s as great pedagogy. But functional history? ... Crowe’s effort was a messy effort. That was my reading in 2005. It did not yield much of a positive view. I got more towards “seeing reality better than it was” (*Method*, 251) about four years later when I tackled it again and as a consequence wrote the related essays of the series *Humus*. Best list them – all part of the lead! – : *Humus 8: Crowe’s Theology of the Christian Word*; *Humus 9: Frederick Crowe and Ourselves as Researchers*. *Humus 10: Fr.Crowe, “The Christian Message Begins”*. *Humus 11: “The Word of God as Truth”*. *Humus 12: Crowe: Possibilities of Methodological Collaboration*.

What do you think of that as “some leads on this”? Or – ho ho – would you wish me to “give” the answer?! A bit like you combing your hair, picking up a piece of paper with the comb, and asking “tell me why this happens?” Do I exaggerate?

I can indeed really **tell** you effectively – for both of us, then, pointing to a slow inner climb – if you have ingested, boned up seriously “being bitten by theory”, this extra metabite following some prolonged bite. [The tenth chapter of the Lambert/McShane Biography of Lonergan describes Lonergan’s bite and his invitation to metabite!]. THAT is something that **just does not belong** in present Lonergan culture. For many the cultural reality of our philosophical and theological efforts are characterized by Lonergan - quite devastatingly if taken to heart and bone: “he is never bitten by theory, he has no apprehension, no understanding, for example, of the fact that Newton spent weeks in his room in which he barely bothered looking at his food, while he was working out theory of universal gravitation”. (CWL 6, 155).

But to the wise – paralleling a good class in physics – further leads can be given without major danger. But not here, not leads to the whole complex enterprise of that morning in Halifax. Nor can the leads of the FuSe Essays be skipped.

The leads taken would be shortcuts to, or round, and indeed beyond, what I pushed through to by ingesting Crowe’s book. You will be doing the ingesting at your own level. This is an important point for us to get to grips with as a community. Our own level, including mine, is shockingly defective. Lonergan’s *Insight* represents a personal climb through what have should be a communal climb of centuries. We live in a mythic academy, but much more deeply in so far as we parade as Lonergan followers - with no sense of what is lacking in that following. It will take

generations to bring the academy beyond myth to mystery as the context for human understanding: but I ramble here into that mad context of *Insight* 17. Let's muse a little about hints.

The hinting is tricky. I paused now to view volumes of Lonergan scholarship: but I really do not wish to pick illustrations from them at present, to the embarrassment of colleagues. But you must have some volume handy, or a paper presented, say, at a conference. We are back with Alpha presenting "Lonergan and Jones on topic X". I leave you to pick your article, one preferably close to your own zone of interest.

[note that I am not commenting here on the narrowness of topics in volumes and at conferences: that is another tragic issue]

Your self-appropriating reading can work down in layers. Start with the commonsense question: does Alpha have an audience in mind? Just the conference members? Just the journal? Does Alpha have some idea of where the contribution might effectively go – apart from adding a publication to a C.V.? Perhaps Alpha has a following? Then Alpha probably thinks of the contribution as going into a pool of relevant communications to and through followers.

Now throw in my suspicion: that Alpha – with decent statistics which for Aristotle would have been 'a majority of instances' – Alpha is undifferentiated in the sense that the talk is, not just non-scientific, but hiddenly totalitarian: "I have discovered something significant that should be.... shared, shared out." The Greek chorus that I talked about a few questions back, if it was **cultured enough** (even only nominally, but of course – here's the rub - cultured in authentic temple-clearing risk-taking), would call out "no". Note, too, that if Alpha was cultured enough the chorus would be within Alpha, at least a sneaking dreaded suspicion within that the stuff spoken or written is really not in the "GEM, 3rd Collection 141" ball park of Lonergan, never mind in the quite startlingly new differentiations of consciousness of functional talk. It is, regularly, Faulty Research and Communications.

My effort is poised to nudge the Lonergan community to that "**cultured enough**" in the next few years by weaving in and around them discomforting "cajoling or forcing attention" (*Insight*, 423, top), so as to generate a commonsense suspicion that the new bent is in fact psychically missing in the operative sense. I reach to what may be sneaking round there in Alpha's psyche but held down magnificently by what I call the axial superego, what you might call simply a rut of conventional talk. I reach to what may be more than sneakily present in a bored or sleepy conference audience.

Now to me the whole farce is quite evident: if you, and a decent percentage of those attending the Halifax conference, or just reading here, follow my hints for a year or a decade the Greek Chorus might emerge in those attending Lonergan conferences and it might voice the pressing suspicion. But surely we can make the suspicion surface, become 20/20 by 2020?

What suspicion?

That Alpha and we are caught in a destructive effete set of conventions – inflexible circles of recurrence-schemes. How destructive? That requires a lot more musing, a communal ethos of

crisis. “The aesthetic apprehension of the group’s origin and story becomes operative whenever the group debates, judges, evaluates, decides, or acts – and especially in a crisis” (Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, 230). We will make a start in Halifax.

But I would obviously wish the suspicion to be effective before that. The group, a group, gathers on June 23, and indeed it is the only such annual gathering. Above, I mentioned nudging, cajoling, forcing attention: Lonergan’s comments on the beginning of serious metaphysics. The group will debate, judge, evaluate etc on that day, but – my pessimistic realism – not attend to my strange views, not notice the shocking scandalous crisis in Lonergan studies. Unless there are a few crazies present who raise the question, even forming a Greek Chorus. Now, wouldn’t that be, literally, a riot?