

SOFDAWARE 7

Symbolizing the Growth of Care

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What have we here, in this penultimate¹ essay in the SOFDAWARE series? I am inviting to settle down - or rather up - down page 250 as one of ten investigators.² It is a discomforting exercise, a piece of the task of musing over the end chapters of the ten books to come up with a revision of your own book. Of course, you don't have your own book, your own *Remembrance of Times Past*, yet you do in your own private way.

The exercise regards two positions, compacted in the title, compacted by me here. You may find it easier to separate them, so here are two sub-positions of mine, stated briefly and out of context, but still sufficiently expressed to be commonly understood:

[1] Progress in heuristics requires concomitant (if not isomorphic) progress in the sophistications of linguistic controls;

[2] Pace of progress in minding - pretty certainly ontogenetically and probably phylogenetically - is a positive³ function of present achievement.

¹It is really the last essay in the sense that SOFDAWARE 8 is a single page that is an appeal for general interest in collaboration. However, the pointing there is relevant to our "page 250" project in that you may take a very practical stand on shifting to some zone in some specialty that suits your present status and life: you are, for instance, trying to write a thesis, an article, a program in some business area, whatever. Such a stand would mesh in with the questions of "stand" that I raise in this essay, but I keep them aside in order to hold focus on the major present cultural issue.

²Ten? There is no significance in the number, unless you think of searching for ten folk with sufficient all-round competence in a present Sodom of subject specializations. But ten does help to envisage that dialectic and foundations is an interdisciplinary zone. Foundations of X is Foundations.

³I have talked of this in terms of the increase in the volume of a balloon that goes with a steady increase of its radius: an increasing increase, so to speak. The

Do these make enough initial vague sense? Let's move on to our ten investigators and their stands on these, which I compact for brevity's sake: P = P[1] + P[2].

You and I are two of the investigators, and of course the problem here is to take the investigating seriously: recall the rambles about *completion*? This can be a difficult and tricky personal business, with all the twists of anxiety⁴ in and about neuroses, scotomata, whatever. But note that a stand on P does not involve a commitment to operate within P. So, one might 'go for' P[1] but rejoice in the fact that, Wow, this is, thank God, not my ballpark. And even with P[2] you might regretfully acknowledge that, Yes, that would be good, but I am too far gone along the road that Maslow identifies as the fate of more than 99% of present adults.

O.K. Let's bring in the other eight investigators. They are Bernard Lonergan, Fred Crowe, Dmitri Mendeleev, 'Joey', Nadia Boulanger⁵, Emmy Noether⁶, Candace Pert,⁷ Rite Carter.⁸ It doesn't matter that you don't know them. I start with three men

mathematicians will recognize possibilities of discussion around the relation $d/dx[e^x] = e^x$.

⁴There is the normal meaning of anxiety and there is the sophisticated meaning that Lonergan and H.S.Sullivan seek to develop. See *Phenomenology and Logic*, index under *anxiety*.

⁵The greatest teacher of music of the twentieth century. She paces around my book *Process*. Of her Aaron Copeland said, 'Nadia Boulanger knew everything there was to know about music; she knew the oldest and the latest music, pre-Bach and post-Stravinsky, and knew it cold.' (quoted in Alan Kendall, *The Tender Tyrant. Nadia Boulanger. A Life Devoted to Music*, MacDonald and James, London, 1976, 10). How did she acquire this, hold it together?

⁶Emmy Noether (1882-1935) was a brilliant algebraist who produced fundamental theorems regarding symmetries in physics. No problem about where she stood in the issue of symbolic language.

⁷Candace Pert was a central figure in Cantower 4. Her key book is *Molecules of Emotion*, Touchstone pb, 1999. Where would organic chemistry be without its

and end with four women, and then there is Joey, the reader of the typescript of *Phenomenology and Logic* who didn't like my original Appendix A: Joey, anonymous, is either male or female. How do the investigators line up? Let us take P[1], on symbols. Let us have a few quotations, which give you a suspicion of two for and two against.

Loneragan: "The aim of discursive reasoning is to understand; and it arrives at understanding not only by grasping how each conclusion follows from premises, but also by comprehending in a unified whole all the conclusions intelligibly contained in those very principles. Now this comprehension of everything in a unified whole can be either formal or virtual. It is virtual when one is habitually able to answer readily and without difficulty, or at least 'without tears,' a whole series of questions right up to the last 'why?' Formal comprehension, however, cannot take place without a construct of some sort. In this life we are able to understand something only by turning to phantasm; but in larger and more complex questions it is impossible to have a suitable phantasm unless the imagination is aided by some sort of diagram. Thus, if we want to have a comprehensive grasp of everything in a unified whole, we shall have to construct a diagram in which are symbolically represented all the various elements of the question with all the connections between them."⁹

diagrammatic structures?

⁸Rita Carter's little book, *Mapping the Mind*, Phoenix, 2000, is one I recommend highly for nudging us beyond imaginings of imagination, phantasms, feelings. A brooding over the diagrams in that book would help you raise the questions lurking in the achievements of the other three women to a new level. That new level is the fundamental problem of driving as individuals and as a post-axial group for a fully explanatory heuristic of being and becoming. The genesis of such a world-view depends massively, in my own climbing experience, on imaging selves chemically. But that is a huge follow-up question on Cantower 9.

⁹ *The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, 151. This is the translation of the text I note in the diagram (I name W3) on p. 124 of *A Brief History of Tongue*, to which the note to the quotation and note to follow refer.

McShane: “The diagram in fact introduces complexities such as ‘mutual self-mediation’ which are beyond the present introductory sketchings. The diagram seems important in itself, an invitation to do one’s own reaching that would always be partial, revisable open. From that point of view the key reference,, near the top left corner, is the reference to Lonergan, *De Constitutione Christi*, Gregorian Press, 1959,80. On that page Lonergan reaches the 24th point of his discussion of the identity of Jesus in which he notes that, unless you have a diagram you won’t have a controlling understanding. Obviously, I took his advice seriously, and have passed it on to you. Further, and paradoxically, the diagram is an invitation not to take fright: as humanity progresses, images necessarily complexify as invitations both to control and to reverence the density of growing meaning. Instead of the notes of birds we have the melodic and symphonic notes, manuscripts of musical genius, mightily beyond our own sensibilities. A good diagram, like the printed image of a piano concerto, calls us, if not to actual reading at least to admiration.”¹⁰

Crowe: “But what is wrong with [his reference here is to the inclusion, in a manuscript of p. 106 of *Wealth of Self* of expressions like $f(p_i ; c_j ; b_k ; z_l ; u_m ; r_n)$]? Its your blessed mathematical notation, which I studied for 83 seconds and then went on. But I’ve been working on my own insight as a consequence. The question: how to use symbolic notation for people to whom it is not as easy as the alphabet? I think that we need to see it forming, element by element, with accompanying explanation. But this means that you never use it in a book where it is all there at one glance, but only viva voce,

¹⁰This is a note, note 127, in *A Brief History of Tongue*, which is written in regard to what I call now W3, the diagram of functional collaboration. I have occasionally suggested the forming of a three-dimensional image by cutting out the diagram and ‘building’ a tower, The Tower of Able. Obviously, more sophisticated imagings are to emerge through new technologies in the next millennia. My plan for 2008 of the Cantowers - now abandoned - was that year being devoted to linguistic sophistications. One gets leads from contemporary logics, and the problem of symbolizing their genetics, etc etc.

drawing in on a blackboard and talking at the same time. Oh I suppose you could put down one letter and explain, then put down two and explain the addition of the second, and use up twenty pages of a book in the process - but in general, and there signs you use in a static state and other signs to be used only in a moving context?"¹¹

Joey: "... In *section one* the editor provides two diagrams [the diagrams of pp.322-3 of *Phenomenology and Logic*] of uncertain origin the use of which is insufficiently justified. The diagrams are complex and not easily understood In *section four* the editor introduces his own symbolism, apparently developed elsewhere, to represent heuristically the complex question of historical humanity. But, as occurred with earlier diagrams, he fails to provide the basic information the reader needs to make sense of his symbolism the reader familiar with Lonergan can probably figure it out."¹²

¹¹I am quoting from a letter of Fred Crowe to me dated May 13, 1972. There are a range of issues regarding page 250 implicitly raised here. So, there is the issue of narrative positioning, the positioning of lifestyle and life-preoccupation. Fr. Crowe and I have differ on the complexity and reachability of human meaning since the late 1960s; in a seminar in 1998 we differed heatedly on the nature of "attention". What is important here is the noticing of the realism of positioning, of *completion*. Notice further that there are suggestions in Crowe's letter, a push on refinement. The ten investigators have to re-assemble, re-complete, etc.... see the exchange as "better than it was" (*Method in Theology*, 251).

¹²I quote from the Reader's Critique of the typescript of *Phenomenology and Logic*, reproduced in *Lack in the Beingstalk*: 112,114. I dropped the 'offending' Appendix A, which I reproduced in chapter 5 of *Lack in the Beingstalk*. The 'offending diagrams', which any student of Lonergan's work should recognize after a month or two, were retained in the shorter new Appendix A of *Phenomenology and Logic*. What I wrote in the previous note should be 'born in mind', cultured, here, with searching degrees of luminosity. Again, narrative discernment is called for, and good things found. But one must note the 'heat' of *completion*. I risk adding here, in relation both to the general 'bitchy' (is that politically incorrect? Is 'bullshit' also a politically incorrect word?) tone of Joey's critique and to the gentle talented tone of Crowe's suggestions and his work in general, that there is a range of anti-theoretic positions operative in present Lonergan studies that menace the future of efficient and beautiful metaphysics. But you have to come to your own heat in this matter.

So far, it would seem that we have two for, two against or at least doubtful. What about the four ladies? They did not write down a position, but their position lives in their writings. How else is one to handle the complexities of music, the subtleties of mathematics, the myriads of molecules of neurodynamics, without a corresponding complexity of symbolization?

Suppose I ask now, What do you think? The question can be read in the old intellectual context, asking then for an opinion, like a post-game opinion. But the question is posed to you for completion within your journey in history towards death and life. Where do you stand? As I remarked this asks you about your own book, “reading the book of yourself” and “remembering the future”. And the main drive of the long cycling of decline is to foster resentment for complexity: the discomfoting diagram or symbolic display that confronts you as you turn a page of text.

So: how do you feel about all this?

And now, or a month later, we can get round to P[2].

P[2] is a very strange principle. I am not going to rustle up quotations on this. You may think in terms of the last page of *Insight*: “the error of those who forget that man is in potency in the realm of intelligence”. The **forget** is, of course, the key, the longer cycling decline-process that calls for a remembrance of times past, passing us by brutal invitation, in life and in history, nicens little tuckoo reaching out, the early African dancer in all of us, a chemistry of wonder-fully-meant.

The principle has become for me, in these past few years, a haunting presence, but it startles me in its obviousness, especially in the simple parallel from struggling with physics. A second year student in physics moves better than a first year student. And I am moving much better in physics now than I was fifty years ago, when I was in second year physics. I began today further ahead than I was yesterday and - allowing for statistics of ups and downs - move on further today than I did yesterday. Is this crazy?

What do you ‘think’? Could it be that you could become a stranger to yourself of

yesterday? Could it be, sadly, that you have been addressed down by yourself and others, by axial decay, so that your daily exchange is very much an echo of Irish pub-talk, “What’ll ya have?” “The usual”.¹³ But I have written enough about this, especially in the concluding pages of chapter 4 of *Lack in the Beingstalk*, and most especially in the final Bacchus Page there. It is a huge topic with huge consequences for our interchanges, our aspirations attitudes towards elderhood. If, normatively, my meaning is not sensed as remote from a younger person by that younger person, then that younger person is likely to be on a decay track, even perhaps folded by culture into a long-term dedication to being “ a faded eighteen year old.”¹⁴

It might help here to give three Lonergan pointers.

First, I would call your attention to the fact that Lonergan places personal relations strangely outside the good of order, on the third line of the display of page 48 of *Method in Theology*. Certainly persons can relate in restful exchange: but the dynamic of creative personal relations is within vertical finality.

Secondly, vertical finality echos with “God’s silent communing with man,”¹⁵ and “vertical finality to God himself is not merely obscure but shrouded in mystery it can be intimated perhaps but hardly in a manner that is unambiguous since vertical finality is multivalent and obscure, and intimations are not apt to make clear which of many possibilities lies in store”¹⁶ The essences of daily things we reach for so poorly in our chemicaled spirits are patterned in the possibilities that lie in store, hidden in God.¹⁷

¹³See *Lack in the Beingstalk*, the concluding pages of chapter 5.

¹⁴I am recalling Proust’s concluding party with Marcel’s illumination about the old folk present there.

¹⁵*Topics in Education*, 225.

¹⁶“Mission and Spirit”, *A Third Collection*, 27.

¹⁷The many things understood as one through one, *Summa Theologica* Ia q.85, a.4c, links up with the drive of the next note.

Thirdly, that reaching can be integral and shift with shocking integrality. So, fresh light on energy or anxiety, on a nest or a nocturne, can lift one beyond yesterday's self into a stranger system of the cosmos. "The conceptualization of understanding is, when fully developed, a system ... the concept emerges from understanding, not an isolated atom detached from all contexts, but precisely as part of a context, leaded with the relations that belong to it in virtue of a source which is equally the source of other concepts."¹⁸

Epilogue

So I wind to the end of this six-week contribution of mine to our reflections on page 250 of *Method*. Have I made this page of the elder Lonergan a little stranger? My mind now is on that other "stranger", Thomas¹⁹ who, tradition would have it, halted because of a mystic lift. This gives a nice excuse for the rest of us to hang humble in searching, wait perhaps for the lift. But might it not be that he was, in his late forties, just moving too too fast, just too too alone?

¹⁸*Verbum*,238.

¹⁹The SOFDAWARE series of 8 essays is a bridge effort between the Cantowers and a new strategic effort with the general title **Quodlibet**. See the second last note of the previous essay.