

Q. 1. Would you please give us a larger context of this shift in your interest to the topic of “functional talk”? It seems like you’re on to a fresh approach for to how to seed “functionality”? Maybe you could also say something about how this may help with some of the topics you’re planning to talk about in the upcoming conference in Halifax, e.g., Conversions to Elementary Reorientations, and Seeds of Functional Talking in Conference. (Terrance Quinn)

A. 1. Thank you, Terry. You actually crystalize a recent puzzling expressed to me by various members of the 2011 seminar group: people then that have been struggling for some time with the problem of functional collaboration. My mind is full of potential linguistic directions, like the mix of Ezra Pound’s Vorticism of 100 years ago with a new Functional Linguistic Analysis, my shifting deeply now the linguistic turn of analysis [Wittgenstein etc] at that time. For Lonergan scholars, however, there would be an obvious way in through stuff in chapter 17 of *Insight* on **expression**. But it seems best to keep things very simple in this initial Q and A venture. So, a few words on context and then a few words on the Halifax meeting.

The full context, yes, is the problem of seeding functionality. That there is a glaring problem is manifest by the lack of response so far to my disturbing suggestion regarding the gathering, on June 23rd, at the end of this year’s Boston Conference. I might as well include that disturbing document here, and I do so as an appendix to this question. There is a massive settledness of Lonergan students in old “closed in upon themselves effete” ways (*Method in Theology*, 99: the section is on “undifferentiated consciousness in the later stages of meaning”). My hope is to catch the attention of younger Lonergan students who are not content with these ways, this drifting-along of Lonerganism that has no resemblance to the drive for Cosmopolis which was the real drive of Lonergan’s heart. That drive in him blossomed into the tired shabby sketching of the second half of *Method in Theology*. But the message was all there in the dense article of the *Gregorianum* of 1969, which became chapter 5 of *Method*. All there? The trouble is, the dense undeveloped answer there to the X of Cosmopolis has not so far got the Lonerganesque minds moving towards asking the brutally difficult effective heuristic question, **What Is This X?**

I am changing the asking of this question in the hope that [1] some young Lonergan students pick up on it; [2] some old Lonergan students challenge me, tell the public, with coherence pointings, that McShane is nuts. Some of these old students are long-term friends and acquaintances, and I am tired of their silence. I would prefer to be treated, as Herman Weyl was, even by friends, at the end of the first World War, “Herman, go and learn some physics!” So, I change my strategy. I slip down from lofty talk of the future or musicology (1969), or literature (1976), or – in the 1990s – economics, linguistics, ecology, law, whatever. I simply turn to factory or bakery collaborative talk and meaning and contrast it with coffee-urn talk. In an auto-factory the tire-maker **means** the tire towards the wheelwright, and so on round the process from metal to motor-vehicle. Nor does it matter that you immediately think that this description is dated. That indeed makes my point: there is to be a lift of expression, of meaning and talk, that can make features of constructing the mobile, the house of history relievingly robotic.

But enough of that for the moment, since, anyhow, it brings us on to your question about Halifax. Indeed, does the chat so far not give a pretty neat elementary clue to the project for that meeting? Best recall the direction of my morning sessions at the conference in July:

Monday The Existential Gap: Heuristic Context and Crippled Conversations **Tuesday** Lonergan Literature as Faulty Research and Communications **Wednesday** Conversions to Elementary Reorientations of Talking **Thursday** Seeds of Functional Talking in Conference Papers **Friday** The Discontinuous Way Forward

Those ten hours will be devoted to initiating the shift I talked about above. We will do it existentially and humbly. Many of those attending will have papers that are mainly in the old styles of Lonergan studies. We will struggle towards some communal capacity, by Thursday, of re-viewing those papers, knowing that the distant goal of functional effective cosmopolitan talk is “sheer mystery diligent authors somewhat bewildered and dismayed when they find that instead of following the bent of their genius, they are to collaborate in the light of common but abstruse principles and to have their individual results checked by general requirements that envisage simultaneously the totality of results.” (*Insight*, 604).

Bewildered? Dismayed? I am desperate to hear, not cries of such frustration from those attending Halifax but shouts of annoyance from those absent. So I repeat below, in the appendix, the communication that certainly brought forth silent annoyance in the Lonergan Establishment. Will the Boston meeting of June 23rd maintain that silence?

APPENDIX: The Challenge to the June Meeting

Dear potential members of the Boston meeting of June 23.

I had already sent the report below to Ken Melchin, shortly after my return from Korea in mid-May, when I received the meeting’s agenda with Father Fred’s article on “Linking the Splintered Disciplines: Ideas from Lonergan” attached. That topic was a dominant theme in Korea. The Oriental solution – where East could meet West, recalling the start of Fred’s article – was that the fragmentation in and around any discipline is to be met, locally and globally, by functional collaboration. That solution, however, is quite in sync with Fred’s narrower emphasis in his article. It is the full solution that he wrote of and fostered elsewhere, as I mention in the Report. It is one that Fred and I spoke about together many times. But it is not the direction pointed to by this Crowe selection. So, I fear that, while my report will be attached to the minutes, the discussion may well be restricted to the topic of interdisciplinary dialogue, a pale shadow of the global functional dialogue envisaged Lonergan in 1965. I risk, then, sharing the report early, in the hope that, in these weeks before the meeting, it would encourage reflection on this vital direction of re-orientation for Lonergan Studies.

Report to the Boston Meeting of June 2012, “In Memoriam Fr. Crowe”.

Phil McShane, President of
SGEME.

There has already been a report from the Secretary, but I consider it appropriate to add my reflections, in light of my personal involvement with non-American interests in better Lonergan Collaboration and of my efforts to meet such needs, expressed thus globally, by re-structuring my Website (see Appendix 1), and by moving to a new creative direction in Conference concern for the upcoming meeting in Halifax (July 16-20; see Appendix 2).

First, I add my own **In Memoriam Fr. Crowe**: it was published shortly after his death, but bears repeating here, both to add to respects being paid to him and to manifest his sense of the need for new creative directions.

*“Fr Fred Crowe’s passing on no doubt fills us all with memories. I am unable to participate in the celebration of his transition, the transition about which he thought and wrote for decades. He was one of the few present theologians who kept a kindly curious eye on the Eschaton. But what I would like to call attention to here, as I remember him, is that wonderful little book, *Theology of the Christian Word : A Study in History* (Paulist Press, 1978). I have always regarded it as a pedagogical masterpiece, but years of struggling with it (See **Cantower 38**, “Functional History”; **Humus 8**, “Crowe’s Theology of the Christian Word”. The following four **Humus** essays there show my dependence on Crowe’s book for my re-conceiving of the functional specialty Research, and that series concludes with **Humus 12**, “Crowe: Possibilities of Methodical Collaboration”) led me to see how extraordinarily right he was in the creative suspicions of his book. Briefly, one can see – or at least I have detected after some decades of groping – how he came, as it were sideways, to the beginnings of what is to be the heart of future Christian theological collaboration. So, if one pauses over the table of contents with serious questions about the treatise on the Mystical Body for which Lonergan longed (*Insight*, 763-4; see also note **g** there on p. 807), one can come to find the seed of the treatise in Fred’s “first sod” (*Theology of the Christian Word*, 149) that he spaded, in optimism, towards the future: “the mountain will be moved – and restructured”(ibid.). One can detect the seed of such a treatise on the Mystical Body as would be an integral open genetic sequence of treatises of all such searchings, eventually to mediate “the ongoing and progressive results” (*Method*, 4-5) that Lonergan anticipated for a future science of functional theology. Crowe cherished Lonergan’s optimism, as I do, and in the late 1970s I complemented his slogan, “What functional specialty are you working in?” with a quip that cheered his heart, one in which I still believe: “if something is worth doing, it is worth doing badly” .*

In his little book, Crowe did functional history badly, but the seed or shoot from it gives us all a nudge. The nudge is to attempt functional collaboration, without which Lonerganism, to use Hugo Meynell's bluntness, becomes a ghetto. The mention of bluntness brings to mind for me Crowe's magnificent bluntness in 1964, about taking Lonergan seriously. "Is there not room for a measure of bluntness at this stage?" (Spirit as Inquiry, Herder and Herder, 1964, 27). So I bluntly ask those in Lonergan studies about the betrayal of Lonergan's final glorious achievement. Crowe and I attended, in those years of the late 1950s and early sixties, to Lonergan's straining struggles, and, in the mid-sixties, shared the joy of his subtle leap to a heuristics of effective functional talk, a statistics of successful implementations. Present Lonergan studies shows no sign of Crowe's patient spading or of his hopefilled conviction, 'the mountain will be moved – and restructured'."

My concern is with that restructuring, which has not been attempted in the forty years since the appearance of *Method* in 1972. The power of the re-structuring was evident to me when I wrote, for the Florida Conference of 1970, of its potential for musicology (available on my Website as chapter2 of *The Shaping of the Foundations*). I had the benefit of Lonergan's guidance into the restructuring from the Summer of 1966. I was optimistic after three years of struggling with the X of functional communications that others would follow through, envisaging and implementing. It is clear to me now that the envisaging of the X that is the heuristics of that restructuring, the X of Cosmopolis identifiable with a functional collaboration "eliminating totalitarian ambitions," ("An Interview with Bernard Lonergan", edited by P.McShane, *Second Collection*, 213) has not been seriously attempted by the Lonergan community. Such an attempt at envisagement would encourage the sort of humble effort that Crowe undertook: initially we cannot but do the job badly. But without the attempt either to envisage or to initiate we stand in danger of history, indeed these next decades, echoing Lonergan's claim: "It asks merely for creativity, for an interdisciplinary theory that at first will be denounced as absurd, then will be admitted to be true but too obvious and insignificant, and perhaps finally be regarded as so important that its adversaries will claim that they themselves discovered it." ("Healing and Creating in History, conclusion")

APPENDIX 1.

The New Website Project, 2012:

Moving Lonergan Studies into Functional Talk.

It seems best to begin with the Lonergan Newsletter entry of June 1st 2012:

“The McShane Website, www.philipmcshane.ca, is taking a final turn. The previous decade’s work is now closed off, except for occasional additions under **Archives**. The fresh collaborative section of the next decade, **Moving Lonergan Studies into Functional Talk**, is described up-front, in a new page 1 on the site, and its initial structure suggested. That structure is to be a Q. and A. process. I invite questions regarding the character of functional talk, a difficult and novel differentiation of expression necessary (see *Insight* 576-81; 592-95) to the maturing of the functional collaboration constitutive of a future Cosmopolis. If so preferred, you can send questions anonymously – e.g. through a mediator. But I urge such questioning, however foggy, about the character and meaning and necessity of functional talk in any zone.”

Where we go to advance beyond this initial collaboration depends on how it goes, and what people suggest. But I note immediately that a reach beyond simple questions within the questions would help. So, lengthy questions, with suggestions, positionings, etc would lead to better structures. Let us putter forward together in the heuristic darkness. And, of course, a name added to your Question would help the conversation along towards better personal exchanges on and off the site, but, as I remarked in the Newsletter entry, identification is not essential. What is essential is “to make conversion a topic” (*Method in Theology*, 253) where the conversion in question, in Questions, is the conversion to a reach for functional collaboration.

APPENDIX 2

Halifax 2012 (July 16 – 20): **Moving Lonergan Studies into Functional Talk**.

Morning Presentations by Philip McShane are named below. Other presentation and discussions are to continue in the same searching mode.

Monday The Existential Gap: Heuristic Context and Crippled Conversations

Tuesday Lonergan Literature as Faulty Research and Communications

Wednesday Conversions to Elementary Reorientations of Talking

Thursday Seeds of Functional Talking in Conference Papers

Friday The Discontinuous Way Forward