

Chapter 6 Galactic Functional Research

A final paragraph in an introductory book is no place to treat of the contrast between *ens extensum* and *intentio* entis. Popularly put, you are larger than the Red Square, Taller than Manhattan, Deeper than galactic space. Not to contemplate that aspirative universe within is much more than a sorry personal loss.¹

In *FuSe Zero*, I presented an outline of a book, not to be written, but to give the direction and mood to the twenty-five seminars to follow. The title of that book was *Galactic Method*. Curiously, no one asked me why I used the word *Galactic*, or suggested that perhaps Global surely was enough of an adjective for method. Perhaps the quotation from that little book of mine of over thirty-five years ago suggests one line of reflection, and it is worth returning to as we move towards the open end of this seminar. Chapter 7, the concluding essay of those connected with this first seminar, has already been written and made available for the Los Angeles Conference after Easter. Its title is, "What is Functional Research?" but of course it does not aim to answer that question. Functional research is to be a reality of the future, mediating, through the digestion of historical anomalies, the cycle of global care that is functional collaboration. Twenty-five seminars will give us a better set of pointers to the nature of that mediation but the pointers will always be to a heuristics, a level of luminous darkness regarding, and guarding, the community of billions of aspirative universes that walk through history. It is a guarding of the Cosmopolis, the X described by Lonergan, and I have risked calling that guarding by what seems a silly name, *Lobbyism*. I am not going to venture further about that here: the pointers to its identity with functional collaboration and to the cultivation of Cosmopolis were given briefly in the conclusion of *FuSe 6* and of *FuSe 7*. What I would have you and I pause over here is the related lobbyist of the future. The 'popular putting' of the initial quotation comes at the end of a first-year university text-

¹ Philip McShane, *Wealth of Self and Wealth of Nations. Self-Axis of the Great Ascent*, first published 1975, 95-96. These are the concluding words of the final chapter which is entitled "The Notion of Survival," which points both to the challenge of functional collaboration and that of microautonomic economics.

book. The issue at the end of this seminar, for you and me, is a deepening of identity, a deepening that reaches beyond the level of the times. Indeed, is that not what functional research is all about, what functional researchers are all about, in the hunt for pointers towards larger life?

Having posed that question, I postpone further chat about it till the conclusion of this essay. The immediate topic of the essay has to be some brief, integral, and helpful comments on the Third Attempt at Functional Research, an attempt which was to include—this was the challenge posed in Chapter 5—a personal positioning on oneself doing this, doing these exercises.

But it would be helpful if I indicated my reasons for this extra push, indeed the larger reach of Chapters 3 to 7. If you look ahead at the list of *FuSes* that are related to the seminars you shall see that there are to be only three *FuSe* essays per seminar from now on. Why the difference here?

For some of you this will be the only seminar, or you may return later to another if you have time, energy, interest. So I aim at a wholesome unity, a raising of questions of one's integral climb, one's mindset in its full possibilities. But do I not have to raise these questions in the seminars to follow? Oh, yes, indeed, even though it poses a problem for those struggling in these new ventures. Lucky you, then, if you venture forward to another seminar: you will have an opportunity of a re-read which is, of course, a fresh read. 'The *isisusa* wedding dance is always appreciated by being repeated.' And so with the is, is, u, **asa** searcher. I repeat the dance freshly today, after listening to the drummer for fifty-five years.

In these last few paragraphs, as in the quotation from the end of *Wealth of Self*, I have been talking about a larger positioning than the one that was the explicit topic of the previous Chapter 5. The focus there was on you trying to make luminous to yourself your stand regarding *acquis*, mindset, stand. The explicit context was your, our, stumbling efforts to do functional research, thus building up a performative basis for the question, what is functional research?

So, at a minimum we can say, functional research is what we have been trying to do. And the trying has been quite an experience for us all, revealing our not-knowing.²

The positioning that we struggle with in the Third Attempt was very

² I had a great deal of exchanging with some, in these months, about the need for a pre-definition or, indeed, a post-definition of functional research. I avoided such defining that would call here for compact expressing. My emphasis was on performances that revealed to all of us the data for searching for the genesis of a sequence of hard-won definitions. At this stage any of us, gathering that data in the context of *FuSe 1*, and the present chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, should be able to reach some definition that would find its place early in the genetic sequence. And I would note that later definitions in the sequence are to be a posteriori, reached from delving into the metaphysical equivalents of the good performances of later times.

much associated with that not-knowing in its communal manifestation, where the community is that of people interested in Lonergan's suggestions about collaboration. So, our assembly was not just of our messing in this seminar but of our, probably quite vague, grip on the story of Lonergan's disciples to his suggestions. However vague our grip, it is the case that the assembly is of varieties of neglect of his suggestions by his disciples. His *acquis*, his *Weltanschauung*, his perspective, his mindset, has not been accepted as a challenge or as something to reach for communally. That previous sentence expresses the stand I took as I sketched the challenge, in Chapter 5, of taking a stand. The degree of non-acceptance: that is a difficult matter, indeed a matter treated in various ways throughout the *Cantowers*, a long series running to 1,500,000 words.³ Yet that difficult matter, *acquis*, mindset, is the context of a goodly serious reflection on the positions taken in the Third Attempt. But what am I to do here regarding the views expressed to me?

What was obvious to me was that I could not name names: indeed, such a request was heard in the movement towards positioning. Younger people were vulnerable; older people did not want their view of colleagues to be aired. Yet, to put the result compactly and mildly, the stands taken were around the claim 'all is not well in Lonergan studies.' The claim for some was centred—and indeed extremely coherently in a few cases—on the disinterest in the topic of functional research. It could surely not be that the answer to the question, 'What is functional research?' is deemed to be obvious? Yet, indeed, that seemed to be the odd case, even though the claim was not out loud: it was rather a loud silence of neglect. And, further—thinking now of the non-centred positionings of others of the seminar—the loud silence was noted not just regarding functional research, but regarding any of the functional ventures. Yes, there is a literature that asks about foundations and doctrines and systematics and communications etc, but the attention of that literature is, in the main, within the context of an *acquis*, a mindset, that twined comfortably into general non-functional discussions in the larger culture of philosophy and theology. But not, as was noted by some in their stand, within the context of the still larger world of the sciences, technologies, arts, therapies, economics, politics.⁴

The consensus of those who followed through with the Third Attempt was that, yes, there is a massive gap between the achieved mindset of Lonergan and the operative mindset of Lonergan followers, but that the

³ The series is described in detail in *Field Nocturnes Cantower 43 (FNC 43)*, "The Full Cantower Series."

⁴ Some of our members noted, with a sense of optimism, a reach into present economics in both theory and practice. In the main, though, that interest is not functional, and it shows little sign of seeding an effective **Lobbyism**. No serious economist, politician or journalist has been lifted towards speaking out intelligently against the conventional stupidity and malice of present money-managing.

important thing to note was an absence of sensitivity to that gap in the school, and the important thing to research functionally and communicate functionally, to ourselves and to others of the school, is the concrete strategies of lifting us out of the settled decline.

What impressed me, and of course pleased me, was that many had found their way to the suspicion I had when I wrote *FuSe 1*: the strategic role of researching texts of Lonergan that give evidence of both neglect of basics, of settledness into decay, and of a road forward. What was distressing to many was the difficulty of envisaging that road forward, and this distress, in the main, was not abstract, so it carries my reflections forward to the personal issue, the issue of moving forward in a life influenced by Lonergan's pointers.

Some few, wisely, are interested in taking the road that I suggest regularly, the authenticity of which I always pointed out to my students in Mount St. Vincent University. For those it becomes a matter of moving on into life with what little you got out of the venture into Lonergan's work—for my students that was symbolized in the little text *Wealth of Self*⁵—recognizing it as a fruitful nominalism, and sharing it as such.

But the personal question for part of our group is 'How am I to move on?' It is a question that has to be answered discerningly, with what help one can get from friends, colleagues, students. It would be foolish of me to venture into this zone of advice in general, but I would make one major point regarding students for those who are teachers. Our move forward must include an honesty about the situation regarding our reach for Lonergan's meaning. As I write this, there comes to mind what I wrote at the conclusion of a book of essays of the 1970s, quoting Leo Strauss' view of "our true situation." Writing on the place of great books in education he remarks: "the facile delusions which conceal from us our true situation all amount to this: that we are, or can be, wiser than the wisest men of our past. We are thus induced to play the part, not of attentive and docile listeners, but of impresarios or lion-tamers."⁶

How, then, to go on as a teacher or a guide? Climb with students with simple illustrations, holding to the texts; guide people away from summary work by leading them, in essays or theses, towards such grim illustrative exercises. Avoid 'the facile delusions' created by comparative references and discussions but rather focus on the objects and subjects

⁵ The two key diagrams in that book (pages 15 and 48) are more fully presented in Appendix A of Lonergan's *Phenomenology and Logic* (CWL 18). The second diagram (p. 48) is very relevant as a correction to deviations and omissions on Lonerganesque thinking.

⁶ Leo Strauss, *Liberalism: Ancient and Modern* (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 3. The remainder of the text in *Lonergan's Challenge to the University and the Economy*, 143 - the book of essays referred to - is worth musing over: a dozen further lines from Strauss. The book is available on my site. Of interest, perhaps, is that the copy there is a photocopy of Lonergan's own copy, with stray comments and markings from him.

about which Lonergan writes. I'll say no more about that: obviously we are reaching forward to problems of interpretation, history and dialectic that impinge on the task of communicating about communications.

Yet the deeper issue is, how to go on as a human being? So, we arrive at that quotation at the beginning, from *Wealth of Self*, pointing us to the challenge of viewing ourselves, our galactic selves.

But what could I possibly mean by the *Galactic Self*? It is the self-as-self vortexing exigently⁷ towards dark self-identification in the **Field**. The full vortexing is, of course, to be the massive communal cycling that supports authenticity and casts off pretense in the comic whirl of Lobbyism. And there is the personal vortex, in all its dimensions, living within that cycle, or in the lobbied sphere of common sense.

There is something to be learned from even the number of those human vortices—so far something over 100,000,000,000—compared to the larger number of the galaxies and the vastly larger number of the stars that are infolded around us in a Big Clasp. Does not each of our clasped human vortices require ongoing galactic functional research, revealing galactic anomalies of our exigence?

I halt here abruptly, cutting off a range of further reachings that might have led to words made fresh and so anomalous. We have had enough trouble with our seemingly simple exercises.

⁷ The index to *Phenomenology and Logic* (CWL 18) gives leads to the meaning of *exigence*.