

Ethics as Functional Collaboration

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Introduction

In most human endeavors collaboration is spontaneously taken to be a sensible and good thing to do, not unlike drinking more water and eating more fruit and vegetables. Whether building a new secondary school or flying a 747, it is more efficient to divide up the various tasks than it is for someone to build or fly solo. But while collaborating is commonly experienced, that does not mean the dynamics of collaborating efficiently are easily understood.

Function is likewise a common experience that is not so easily understood. It is not so difficult to identify, for example, when the refrigerator is not functioning well. Nor is it difficult to identify what to do in such instances: we call a mechanic, the one who knows how to get it functioning again. However, if we consider recurrence schemes of dysfunctioning local high schools or local economies, things are not so simple. Whom do we call? How do we move from "something is amiss" to "what we ought to do is ..."?

The thesis of the essay is that Bernard Lonergan discovered a way to collaborate efficiently and that whatever small steps we might take to foster such collaboration are good steps leading to adventure.¹ A spirit or

¹ This essay is written with Lonergan enthusiasts in mind, but I do not believe that being such an enthusiast is a *sine qua non* for gleaning something from the essay, and, in fact it might be a stumbling block. Like Kierkegaard and a host of others, Lonergan had no intention or desire to found a school, but rather to "help people experience themselves understanding, advert to the experience, distinguish it from other experiences, name and identify it, and recognize it when it occurs." Bernard Lonergan, "Insight Revisited," *A Second Collection* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), 269 (hereafter *A Second Collection*). Enthusiasts are called to non-discipleship and self-appropriation, if not the "five-finger exercises" in the first eight chapters of the book *Insight*, then simpler exercises. Much depends upon the luck you had in secondary and high school. In any case, while I am immensely indebted to the print Lonergan left behind, I am also convinced that if his leading ideas are to be recycled and bear fruit, it will be through direct discourse and linguistic feedback which, to a certain extent, were beyond his horizon. He did not manage to leap-frog over "axial talk of a long tradition of fragmentation and truncation." Philip

mood of anticipating adventure should be present in our efforts to figure out what to do with local high schools and local economies. But to a large extent such a mood is absent in what is being published and professed in both areas, and in just about every area in between. Why this is so and what we should do about it is a principal concern of this essay.

In the first part I begin with two stories that exemplify collaboration as actually experienced. In the second part I recover some of Aristotle's claims in the *Nicomachean Ethics* in order to counter the attitude that considers ethics to be a matter of common sense, and to distinguish between "pure ethics" and "ethics as 'x'." Ethics as "x" is oriented to the concrete good, which is a history that includes the future. I maintain that traditional field and subject divisions do not promote future-leaning, adventure-anticipating "What next?" questions, and therefore have little to do with the concrete good. I also claim that debates about "first philosophy" that do not consider the problem of figuring out how to collaborate within and across disciplines are not really going anywhere. In the third part I draw upon an analogy of planning a family vacation to claim that functional collaboration would be a convenient way to proceed. In the epilogue I propose that foundational listening and speaking will be a part of the convenient way.

I. Collaboration

A. Family Vacations

When I was a young boy, growing up in Southern California in the 1970s, family vacations meant packing up the station wagon or a Winnebago motor home, and driving to the Sierra Nevada Mountains in California for a week or two of fishing, horseback riding, singing around the campfire, hiking, skipping stones, etc. Naturally a mood, an ethos, of aspiration and anticipating adventure emerged some days before the departure date.

Since there were nine of us involved, getting out the door and on the road was quite a task, but as might be expected, the chores were divided up and each did his or her little part to expedite the departure. Besides packing clothes, food, and camping gear, there was the task of older siblings helping out the younger ones to be sure things like underwear and warm sweaters were not forgotten. Besides packing food for the road, there were individual needs of ketchup, mustard, and mayonnaise. There were a myriad of other considerations—packing books, games, and cards, both for the drive and for the destination; negotiating spots in

McShane, "The Meaning of Credit," 21 *Divyadaan: Journal of Philosophy and Education* (2010), 163-182, at 169. The dreaded point here is that Lonergan is really not the point; the point is how I meet, greet, bind, and guard my significant other and my significant self in the darkness of history.

the motor home (the bed above the driver was a coveted spot); making sure bodily needs were met before departure; checking fishing gear and licenses.

The division of labor involved in getting a group of nine out the door and on the road to enjoy the great outdoors is not unusual. As a matter of fact, the division is quite ordinary and spontaneous, and, in the case of the family vacation, a matter of common sense. There was someone directing the effort, typically Mom directing indoor tasks and Dad directing those outdoors on the driveway or in the garage. Certainly checking the air pressure in the tires, the oil, and other fluids was not a task for just anyone, but rather a task for someone with knowing-how experience. But it did not require anything resembling scientific understanding of pressure as the amount of force acting per unit area ($P = F/A$). Neither Mom nor Dad had a degree in automotive engineering, industrial design, business administration, tourism, organizational psychology, or nutrition and wellness. In fact Dad had a degree in business and Mom would receive a degree in gerontology some twenty years later.

Each time we prepared to make the trip anew, memories of past vacations, together with an anticipatory spirit of adventure, animated both young and old. Gathering the fishing poles and tackle in the garage triggered memories of the “big ones” we had caught the year before. Seeing the pancake mix and syrup on the kitchen table delighted us and added to the joy of packing, for vacations meant deviating from the normal healthy diet and indulging in the likes of pancakes and bacon. Sometimes the drive was not to the Sierra Nevada Mountains, but to the Pacific Coast of California. While wiping off sand from the boogie boards in the garage and looking for the fins, imaginary waves rolled into the garage. Others would go shopping, read, converse idly in beach chairs; my plan was to spend the days in the surf, getting out of the water only to eat a sandwich. After eating, the rule was to wait a half an hour or so before returning to the waves. Something about “letting your food digest.” So we would lie in the sun like lizards.

B. San José, Chile, October 2010

On Tuesday and Wednesday, October 12th and 13th, 2010, millions of people around the world followed the story unfolding in San José, Chile, the longest known ordeal of men trapped underground, half a mile beneath the surface of the Atacama Desert, the driest place on the planet. The sixty-nine-day ordeal ended in a dramatic twenty-three-hour rescue of the thirty-three miners, ranging in age from nineteen to sixty-three. During their sixty-nine days trapped underground, the men were fed and cared for by a team of hundreds through a narrow borehole. The hundreds of caretakers included a team of psychologists whose role was to help keep the men sane during the ordeal.

After drilling the escape shaft to the underground prison on Saturday, October 9, 2010, it was estimated that it would take from thirty-six to forty-eight hours to get everyone out. The rescue team was soon able to cut the time down between each ascent, and it became clear that the operation would be completed in half the time originally estimated. The rescue mission began on Monday, October 12 and ended on Tuesday, October 13. The actual time: twenty-two hours and thirty-nine minutes.

Upon their ascent to the surface, the miners wore sunglasses to protect their eyes from the glare and a “bio-harness” designed for astronauts to monitor their heart rate, breathing, temperature, and oxygen. As a result of living in the dirt and darkness of the mine, some of the men had severe dental infections, and others eye problems. One was diagnosed with pneumonia.

A year after the ordeal, half the miners wanted to return to work in other mines. The film rights to the story have been sold to a Hollywood producer. The rescue will end up costing between \$10 and \$20 million. President Sebastian Piñera, who greeted the miners as they arrived at the surface in specially-built capsules, now faces difficult questions about the failure to carry out a promise he made days later during a European “victory tour.” He said during a television interview in London that Chile would ratify the “Safety & Health in Mines Convention” established by a UN agency, the International Labor Organization. The convention has already been ratified by twenty-five countries, including Brazil and Peru in South America, African nations such as Botswana and Zambia, and most recently Ukraine. But Chile has since backed away from the convention, which demands that mines have at least two exits and guarantees the right of workers to raise safety concerns.

Throughout the sixty-nine-day ordeal all of those involved—and that would include the millions following on television, radio, or other technologies of information or communication—were psychologically leaning forward, that is feelingfully imagining, and anticipating how the drama could or should unfold. This was true even of those who were in a way “looking backwards,” for example, those investigating past mining accidents, those examining medical records of the trapped miners, or geologist studying the original design of the mineshaft. Those researching trauma and shock of past accidents were doing so for the sake of treating the thirty-three men.

The drama is not over yet. The commission formed to investigate the accident and recommend changes shut down at least eighteen small mines for safety violations, but their work continues. Many of the miners today are jobless. Nine of them are receiving sick-leave pay for prolonged post-traumatic stress, while a handful of others say they are seeing private therapists. “Most of us are in the same place with emotional and psychological problems,” said Jimmy Sánchez, twenty

year-old. “It was the fear that we would never again see our families that we were going to die. We just can’t shake those memories.”²

II. Ethics

A. Spontaneous Questions and Belief

Etymologically the word “ethics,” from the Greek *ethos*, refers to the characters we become and the customs we acquire with the passing of time. Such acquisition is largely a matter of learning how to behave, what to do, and what to expect from and within a family, as well as other institutions like schools, church groups, and athletic teams. In collaborating to get out the door and on the road to our family vacation, there were nine characters involved in carrying out the various tasks and, in so doing, further developing our characters and the customary way of collaborating. In San José there was not a custom *per se* of rescuing miners, but there was quite a cast of characters collaborating with one another. In both scenarios the good will of those collaborating came to expression and was seen in action in their operating and cooperating.

In both scenarios, and in any collaborative endeavor, action, operation, and cooperation are not mindless, but rather are answers to questions that spontaneously occur: “What are some possibilities?” “What’s the plan?” “Should I try for publication?”³ “Should we occupy Wall Street?” “What do we really want?” “What do we do next?” In the family vacation scenario the answer to the “What do we want?” question was: “We want to get out the door and on the road as soon as possible because the mountains (or waves) are calling our names.” In Chile the answer to the same question was: “We want to save the lives of the thirty-three men trapped in the mine.” In both scenarios the answer to the “What do we do next?” question was the collaborative effort between all those involved.

In neither scenario would it have made much sense to pause for an hour or two to review Rawl’s “original position,” Enrique Dussel’s philosophy of liberation,⁴ or Leo Strauss’s position regarding the modern

² “A Year Out of the Dark in Chile, But Still Trapped,” *The New York Times*, October 12, 2011, accessed December 3, 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/12/world/americas/chiles-rescued-miners-face-major-struggles-a-year-later.html?pagewanted=all>

³ Bernard Lonergan faced the question in the early 1950s. See the letters he wrote to Fred Crowe (dated December 23, 1952) and to Eric O’Conner (dated July 23, 1952) in Pierrot Lambert and Philip McShane, *Bernard Lonergan: His Life and Leading Ideas* (Vancouver: Axial Publishing, 2010), 155-156.

⁴ Enrique Dussel (1934-) is an Argentine-Mexican philosopher and professor in the Department of Philosophy in the Metropolitan Autonomous University, Mexico City. Author of more than 50 books, his expansive thought spans the areas of ethics, political philosophy, theology, and aesthetics. His

separation of ethics and politics and the rise of the primacy of the *homo economicus*.⁵ It is not obvious how collaboration in these or any other scenario would be improved in any way by taking the time to understand what philosophers have to say about ethics. The fact that we hardly have to think about raising questions as “What do we want?” and “What do we do next?” would seem to imply that delving into philosophical treatises does not really add much to collaboration as it is actually experienced.

That is certainly the attitude of many students who are required to take core courses in ethics in liberal arts institutions. Their spontaneous expectation, which is merely a reflection of the culture, is that there is a huge disjuncture between philosophical “theories” (virtue ethics, deontology, utilitarian) and/or various “-isms” (pragmatism, empiricism, idealism, utilitarianism, critical realism) and real life. In addition there is an expectation that studying ethics is going to be easier than studying statistics, molecular biology, agro-biotechnology, international political economy, and medical nutritional therapy in surgery. Students know from their high school study of philosophical figures, schools, periods, and “-isms,” that philosophers have a hard time agreeing on pretty much anything. Even though their teachers ask them to move beyond *doxa* to *episteme* in their final essays, many of them observe at the end of their semester-long survey courses that very little has been settled: *doxa* defeated *episteme* mightily. How could ethics possibly be anything more than using common sense to tweak opinion?

B. Rescuing Aristotelian Ethics

There are aspects of Aristotle’s “question-begging”⁶ and “empirical”⁷ *Nicomachean Ethics* that run counter to the view that ethics is basically a

recent works include *Twenty Theses on Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), and *Beyond Philosophy: History, Marxism, and Liberation Theology* (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003).

⁵ See Leo Strauss, “Three Waves of Modernity,” in *Political Philosophy: Six Essays by Leo Strauss*, ed. Hilail Gilden (Indianapolis: Pegasus, 1975), 81-98.

⁶ It is question-begging because the measure of ethical virtue for Aristotle is the prudent man, or, as we might say in contemporary terms, the well- or deeply-developed person. *Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Hippocrates G. Apostle (Iowa: Peripatetic, 1984), 28-29, (1107a1-2) (hereafter *Nicomachean Ethics*).

⁷ Aristotle’s ethics is empirical, but not empiricist, because “every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and intention is thought to aim at some good.” *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1 (1094a1-2). This is phenomenologically verifiable, for example, whenever we walk, we walk somewhere. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Maryland: Christian Classics, 1981), I-II, q. 1, art. 7, (hereafter *Summa Theologica*). See also the requirement of “complete consistency” about which

matter of common sense. For Aristotle ethics is a discipline that is not appropriate for the young, who, besides tending to follow their passions, lack experience and therefore lack the education to be “good judges.”⁸ Practitioners of the discipline know that cultivating virtuous character is a lifelong endeavor, “for one swallow does not make a spring,”⁹ and they “bear the fortunes of life most nobly.”¹⁰ Since Aristotle wrote two books on friendship, it is safe to say that he considered personal relationships crucial for the lifelong *discipline* of cultivating virtuous character. Finally, the difficult final chapter X about the contemplative life that “would be more than human,” a life guided by intelligence and thus divine in comparison with human life, suggests displacement, self-transcendence, and concern for who or what is other, where “other” means much more than merely being able to correctly use words such as “difference,” “discontinuity,” “contingency,” “instability,” “plurality,” “chance,” or “randomness.”¹¹

Aristotle’s critique of Plato’s view of the “Good Itself” draws a line between what I will call “pure ethics,” on the one hand, and “ethics as ‘x,’” on the other. What a doctor examines is not the Idea of health, “but rather the health of man, or perhaps rather the health of an individual man, since what he cures is an individual [and not man in general].”¹² Knowing the “Good Itself” does not benefit the doctor and does not help him to become a better a doctor. Doctors cure individual patients, which is tantamount to saying that the good is particular and concrete.

Lonergan writes in chapter 18 of *Insight*: “There is no room for choosing the part and repudiating the whole, for choosing the conditioned and repudiating the condition, for choosing the antecedent and repudiating the consequent.” *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, ed. Frederick Crowe and Robert Doran, vol. 3, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 625 (hereafter, *CWL* 3). A basic question that I am posing in this essay is: “Is there room for repudiating functional collaboration?”

⁸ “Now a man judges well the things he knows [well], and it is of these that he is a good judge; so a good judge in a subject is one who is educated in that subject, and a good judge without qualification is one who is educated in every subject.” *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2-3 (1095a1-3). Ordering and judging collaboration well, perhaps even really well, is a primary focus of this essay.

⁹ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 10 (1098a19).

¹⁰ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 15 (1100b21).

¹¹ Cf. Fred Lawrence, “Lonergan and Contingency,” a section within his larger article, “The Fragility of Consciousness: Lonergan and the Postmodern Concern for the Other,” 54 *Theological Studies* (1993), 55-94, at 78-92. Lawrence writes that if the postmodern “instinct for the nonsystematic becomes a basis for overlooking statistical, genetic, and dialectical methods, as well as just debunking all classical intelligibility, it is not really taking contingency seriously. It is just glorifying the aleatory.” *Ibid.*, 82. See also the discussion of nominal and explanatory definitions in chapter 1 of *Insight*. *CWL* 3, 35-36.

¹² *Nicomachean Ethics*, 7 (1097a12-14).

Of course there are any number of differences between Aristotle's worldview and a contemporary one.¹³ Modern science does not seek universal and necessary laws, but probable explanations; probability and statistics exists as a legitimate method of inquiry.¹⁴ Most philosophers no longer write or talk about the "soul" and its "faculties." Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, among many others, have named moderns 'sins,' and the resulting worldview is radically hermeneutical.¹⁵ Meanings and values are not univocal, but rather sequenced in a myriad of definitions that are themselves developing¹⁶ in a many-colored globe. Understanding "liberty," "money," or "function," implies studying historical sequences of definitions.

If to the Aristotelian "the good is always concrete and particular," we add that "the good is a history, a concrete, cumulative process,"¹⁷ not any process whatsoever, but historical process "in which we are involved now and for the rest of our lives,"¹⁸ then understanding and implementing the concrete good is, if not an impossible task, then a mammoth task. "What next?" and "How do or should we collaborate?" questions are problematized by hermeneutical phenomenology, historical studies, and the complementarity of classical and statistical methods. Nevertheless, in spite of these and any other post-Aristotelian discoveries, and in spite of the fact that the meaning of terms is not univocal, ethics is a praxis that either encompasses a disciplined orientation towards seriously understanding the particular and

¹³ For Aristotle, ethical virtue is "defined by reason and as a prudent man would define it." *Nicomachean Ethics*, 29 (1107a2). As Kierkegaard questioned whether those desiring to "go beyond" faith had even reached a faith to go beyond, I suspect that attempts to go beyond or "deconstruct" reason without a Zen-like, patient, and practical retrieval of seriously understanding some "x" is like a blind person trying to critique a van Gogh painting.

¹⁴ See Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, *CWL* 3, chapters 2-4.

¹⁵ *N.B.* The hermeneutical circle was not altogether unknown to Aristotle, who claimed that "the end appears to each man to be of such kind as to correspond to the kind of man he is." *Nicomachean Ethics*, 45 (1114b1-2). Aquinas would repeat "*Qualis unusquisque est, talis et finis videtur ei.*" See *Summa Theologica* I, q. 83, a. 1, obj. 5a; I-II, q. 10, a. 3, ad. 2.

¹⁶ In "Dimensions of Meaning," Lonergan contrasts "classical culture" with a modern mediation of meaning: "Today terms are still defined, but definitions are not unique: on the contrary, for each term there is a historical sequence of different definitions; there is a learned explanation for each change of definition; and there is no encouragement for the sanguine view that would exclude further developments in this changing series." *Collection*, ed. Frederick Crowe and Robert Doran, vol. 4, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 243 (hereafter *CWL* 4). See also note 31 below and the quotation in the text associated with it.

¹⁷ See *Topics in Education*, ed. Robert Doran and Frederick Crowe, vol. 10, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 33 (hereafter, *CWL* 10).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, and see note 19 below.

concrete—be it medical, psychological, or economical—or it does not. On the other hand, pure ethics skirts the issue of seriously understanding the real world.¹⁹

What I mean by “seriously understanding” can be gleaned by comparing the adventure of family vacations with the adventure of rescuing miners. Unlike the collaboration involved in getting out the door and on the road to the Sierra Nevada mountains, which was largely a matter of common sense know-how, the rescuing of thirty-three miners was permeated by a division of roles and tasks according to abilities and knowledge, not all of which was common sense. The know-how, know-who, know-what, know-what-of, know-what-for, know-where, know-why, know-when, and know-that of geologists differs from that of nutritionists, and for that reason the geologists did not meddle in the affairs of the nutritionists, nor did the psychologists or reporters make suggestions to the engineers constructing the narrow borehole. Reporters, doctors, psychiatrists, geologists, engineers, and family members—they all had their specific tasks to do, each asking “What’s to be done?” Spontaneously operative was a respect for the myriad of questions raised and answered by others. Questioning, formulating possibilities, deciding on a best plan, and taking action were not done mindlessly, but no single person had in his or her mind the cumulative thinking of the group. In other words, belief was crucial in the collaborative effort to rescue the thirty-three miners.

This distinction between pure ethics and ethics as “x” is hugely relevant and presents one of the principal challenges to collaborating efficiently. If our “What do we want?” and “What do we do next?” questions are oriented towards healing the sick, there is simply no short-cut around understanding. Ethics as “x” implies understanding “x.” Such disciplined study is tenaciously concrete and becomes “general” only in a concrete way, and thus is abstract in the best sense of “abstract as enriching.”²⁰

¹⁹ On a similar note, Alasdair MacIntyre writes: “Philosophy just is conceptually self-conscious enquiry in whatever field. There are philosophical physicists, historians, linguists, theologians, and psychologists; but ‘the philosopher,’ who is philosophical *an sich*, but not any of these, nor a philosophical mathematician nor a . . . (the list is as long and as indeterminate as are the descriptions of intellectual enquiry) is a mythological beast.” Alasdair MacIntyre, “Philosophy, the ‘Other’ Disciplines, and their Histories,” 65 *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* (1982), 127-145, at 142. On the difficult task of “assembling” (last word, *Method*, 249) MacIntyre’s *After Virtue*, see Philip McShane, *Sofdaware* 6 “Rambles in Method 250.” <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/sofda-06.pdf>

²⁰ See *CWL* 3, 111-112. An introduction to what it means to think both concretely and generally about a horse is found in chapter 37, “Metaphysics,” in John Benton, Alessandra Drage, and Philip McShane, *Introducing Critical Thinking* (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Axial Press, 2005), 146-150.

C. Professional Ethics

For better or worse, I am in the business of teaching and occasionally giving conference talks on themes related to ethics, critical thinking, and humanistic education. While it is true to say that there was a spontaneous, forward-leaning, adventure-anticipating care present in collaborating, both to get out the door on the family vacation and to rescue the thirty-three miners, there is not an analogous forward-leaning ethos present in professional gatherings and publications. A spirit of adventure is missing, and grossly so, in the culture of those thinking and writing, speaking and listening, publishing and reading. Why? Could there be a pervasive, latent belief that to be serious about the concrete, historical good, does not require being seriousness about the future? What would it mean to seriously understand the future?

One of the blocks to thinking about thinking seriously about the future is the customary way that philosophers (and others) divide up professional roles and tasks. When asked by perplexed students and colleagues what exactly it is that we do, most of us probably do not say that we are preparing ourselves intellectually and morally for death,²¹ nor do we say we are fantasizing how philosophers will write and speak in the year 3512.²² Instead we refer to the courses that we teach, the kinds of problems that we address in our research and writing, or the conferences that attract our attention. These three sectors are typically further divided by topics, periods, figures, and approaches.²³

Topics are distinguished by results, and would include ethics, epistemology, metaphysics, philosophy of art, and philosophy of the person. Periods are distinguished not so much by results as by historically ordering the data under investigation: ancient, medieval, modern, nineteenth century, or postmodern philosophy. Division by figures refers to seminars, journals, or conferences dedicated to the works of one figure, for example *Husserl Studies* or the “American Maritain Society.” Divisions by approach are those courses, journals, and conferences that embrace and embody a family resemblance among a group of thinkers and emphasize a general way of doing philosophy. Examples of these would be a course on British empiricism, the “Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy,” and Feminist Studies.

²¹ Socrates held that the vocation of true philosophers is to prepare themselves for death. See *Phaedo*, 61c-69e.

²² The date takes into consideration Goethe’s remark, “He who cannot draw on three thousand years is living from hand to mouth.” The year 3512 is merely the addition of 1,500 years to the year 2012.

²³ For example, in “Jobs for Philosophers,” published by the American Philosophical Association (University of Delaware, Newark DE), the categories AOS (area of specialty) and AOC (area of competence) largely follow these divisions.

It could be argued that ethics is to be found in all of the divisions: (i) by topic in survey courses on ethics, which typically cover various schools and/or -isms; (ii) by period, for example in postmodern ethics and attempts to thematize “the Other” or “Otherness”; (iii) by figure, for example in a seminar on Aristotle, Kant, or Lonergan; (iv) by approach, for example by comparing the ethics of various Marxist or feminist thinkers.

It could also be argued that ethics is found in the debates regarding “first philosophy,” which are alive and well. Most claim that neither logic nor metaphysics can do the job. Some are claiming that philosophy of culture is first philosophy, others maintain that ethics is really “first,” still others vote for epistemology or cognitional theory.²⁴ In any and all cases, the assumption is that there is or is to be found a privileged starting point.

In order to get around the limiting and misleading connotations of ethics that stem from current practices and divisions, let “ethics” be the praxis of a global group of forward-leaning, adventure-anticipating persons who are oriented towards seriously understanding the concrete, and who have figured out a way to divide up a large number of questions of the type “What is the current situation with regard to ‘x’?” “How did we get here?” “What do we want?” and “What is to be done next?” These questions are about understanding what is and has been, and about how to implement timely ideas in order to make better or best the current situation. The spontaneous forward-lean that was present in both the family vacation and the rescue of miners is shared by all those in the group because even the researchers and historians, like the Chinese acrobats, have in embodied-mind the roles and tasks of the rest of the team.²⁵

²⁴ This might seem where Lonergan begins in *Insight* part I, “Insight as Activity,” what he would later call “a series of five-finger exercises inviting the reader to discover in himself and for himself just what happens when he understands.” See the reference in note 1 above. Two brief comments might help. First, the five-finger exercises are extremely demanding exercises. Secondly, *Insight* existentially begins in chapter 14 with “the native bewilderment of the existential subject, revolted by mere animality, unsure of his way through the maze of philosophies, trying to live without a known purpose, suffering despite an unmotivated will, threatened with inevitable death and, before death, with disease and even insanity.” *CWL* 3, 410. In another context, Lonergan would write that “the point is to complete the circle.” Bernard Lonergan, “The Problem of Objectivity,” lecture 7, §2.5, in *Understanding and Being*, ed. Elizabeth A. and Mark D. Morelli, vol. 5, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 176-180, at 178 (*CWL* 5). In the case of *Insight*, that includes both the five-finger exercises and the revolt, uncertainty, and living without a purpose. It is a strange book, indeed.

²⁵ Likewise, those participating in the highly specialized research going on in CERN are finely-tuned to particular tasks and to one another. The European

Since the forward-leaning praxis is concrete and historical, the primary focus of the group is not the politics of short-term planning. In printed and spoken word and deed they counter tendencies to overrate what appears to be “practical” and “realistic” and to neglect long-term policy-making, planning, and implementation. In addition, they search for ideas that have, perhaps, been overlooked or declared impractical. The group of forward-leaners is not primarily focused on shifts of power and influence between competing political parties or labor or school unions. They are able to identify their own tendency to focus on short-term results and neglect history and futurology. Something or someone has cured them of rationalizations and effectively oriented their liberty to what is best for the human family. They do not skirt the task of tracing current attitudes to their origins, as difficult and arduous as that task might be. Nor do they exclude from their forward-leaning the contributions to be made by a host of others who are developing art, media, education, newspapers, talk shows, university forums, street theatre, etc. Obviously the tasks of the forward-leaners are not easy and they are a patient group, not settling for mediocre policies or plans, and not caught up in the current fads.²⁶

Since the hoped-for results of the group effort have to do with concrete history and the future, which includes the history and future of medicine, mating, and much more, it is inefficient to limit the myriad dialogues to those that occur in topic, figure, period and approach courses, journals, articles, conferences, and workshops. Is it not dizzying and bewildering, then, to ask about what is to become of first philosophy? Could this be an example of “apprehend[ing] that in some fashion the point is that there is no point, or that the solution is to deny a solution”?²⁷

III. Ethics as Functional Collaboration

A. A Mexican Family on Vacation in Acapulco

One of the emerging challenges of first philosophy vertigo is fantasizing how to give birth to a group of forward-leaners who concretely care about flows of basic and surplus goods and services in their city or

Organization for Nuclear Research (The name is derived from the acronym for the French *Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire*, or European Council for Nuclear Research) is a large and respected research center whose business is fundamental physics. The instruments used at CERN are particle accelerators and detectors.

²⁶ Those familiar with chapter 7 of *Insight (CWL 3)* will recognize in this short description of ethics as the praxis of a group of forward-leaning characters characteristics of “Cosmopolis.”

²⁷ *CWL 3*, 44.

town.²⁸ If such disciplined, collaborative care is a novelty, and not a present reality,²⁹ then how are we to begin to understand much less implement, something that does not exist? I find the following analogy helpful.³⁰

Imagine a couple that lives in Mexico City has a small vacation house near the coast of Acapulco. Twenty years ago, Maria, who was born in Huandacareo, Michoacán, and Carlos, who was born in Coyoacán, Mexico City, inherited the small beach house while they were in their early 20s. Since then the beach house has been their favorite place to vacation during the Christmas season.

Maria and Carlos have two children, Alfredo and Mónica. Years ago, when Alfredo was two years-old and Mónica was three years-old, Maria and Carlos invited Lupita, Maria's mother, and Rigoberto, Carlos's widowed brother-in-law, to join them on the annual vacation. Every December, for many years, they have packed up and driven to the bungalow just outside Acapulco. With the passing of the years, the group does not look forward to going there like they once used to.

Lupita has discovered through the years that her true joy is playing bingo, but she has had to leave it behind during the vacation. She also misses the processions, food, and "convivencia" (enjoying being together) of annual pre-Christmas "posadas." Uncle Rigoberto, a quiet man who enjoys meeting up with his elderly friends to have a few tequilas and to simply talk, does not drive, and the bungalow is twenty kilometers from the nearest liquor store. This past year Maria and Carlos

²⁸ A good introduction to the distinction between basic and surplus flows of goods and services is Michael Shute, "Real Economic Variables," 21 *Divyadaan: Journal of Philosophy and Education* (2010), 183-194. Should moral philosophers bother to understand economic flows? Lonergan's brief and brutal reply: "From moral theorists we have to demand, along with their various other forms of wisdom and prudence, specifically economic precepts that arise out of economic process itself and promote its proper functioning." "Healing and Creating in History," in *Macroeconomic Dynamics: An Essay in Circulation Analysis*, ed. Frederick Lawrence, Charles Hefling, and Patrick Byrne, vol. 15, *Collected Works of Berand Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 105 (CWL 15).

²⁹ In trying to size up the efficiency and beauty of speaking at conferences and workshops, or writing for journals and books, a decent question to ask myself is: "Am I ordering, pointing, my work towards circulation? And in that ordering, doing a solid job on my bit of the relaying?" Philip McShane, *Cantower XXXV*, "The Focus on Function," <http://www.philipmshane.ca/cantower35.pdf>, note 14. I comment on my preadolescent rambling all over the place in this essay below at note 56.

³⁰ This story is an adaptation of the story of a Toronto family that has a cottage at a lake north of the city, in Philip McShane, *Economics for Everyone Das Jus Kapital* (Halifax: Axial Press, 1998), 149-152. Note that the story could also be adapted to Boston, Bogata, Cairo, Caracas, Madrid, Manila, Paris, Prague, Seattle, Seoul, or whatever city or town in which you currently and concretely live.

have concluded that he has a drinking problem, so they have declared the next vacation dry.

Alfredo and Mónica enjoyed playing alone and making sand castles on the shoreline until they hit their mid-teens, but nowadays they are more interested in the discos of Acapulco and in Facebook than in sand castles. María and Carlos are going through a mini mid-life crisis. In the last three years, Carlos has been spending much time watching soccer games with his high school pals, either in person or at the bar. He insists that watching soccer calms his nerves, and since he would prefer to watch soccer with company, last year he invited Manuel to join them in Acapulco. María has a strong suspicion that Manuel is a “narcotraficante,” and therefore a bad influence on her husband, but Carlos does not seem worried in the least. Meanwhile Grandma Lupita has just recently rediscovered a devotion to praying the rosary that she first discovered as a young girl, but she does not like to pray alone and the others do not share her devotion.

The crisis time arrives, the time to make a decision about the December vacation, and the time to pause together to restore confidence and remember the importance of each and everyone’s desires and fears, exasperations and happiness. What has been happening over the years? What is to be done so that all can once again enjoy the holidays?

To their great credit, the family does not take the easy route of carelessness, of unfounded optimism, or of launching accusations willy-nilly. Instead they try to work together to figure out how to move forward. They do not settle for hearsay; they look for clues in diaries, credit card receipts, photos, and other memorabilia; they investigate changes in the neighborhood, changes in local transportation, and changes in climate. Monica’s diary reveals frustrations of blossoming femininity in the presence of her father’s machismo. Maria and Carlos gather the credit card receipts of the past five years and sit down to have a heart to heart.

Besides gathering documents, they interpret them, and the interpretation varies from one person to another, one age to another. They try to figure out what has been happening in the last fifteen years. What was and what is the true history of those Decembers together in the beach bungalow? Each one with his or her set of inclinations, beliefs, and orientation, puts forward a history, but the histories do not corroborate one another. Something is amiss. Which is correct? Who is mistaken? What should they do, both individually and communally, to understand what has been going on for the past fifteen years in order to fantasize a range of possible vacations for the next December vacation?

B. What Is a Function?

Common sense suggests that “function” means something that soda machines do, cars do, economies do, people do, or do not do, or do not do very well. Thus, “my car functions” means it runs well, gets me to

and from, does not make strange sounds, and does not burn much oil. If you have a mathematical inclination, you might add to the commonsense meaning the un-commonsense meaning represented by symbols ($[x, f(x)]$), graphs, and formulas, for example $f(x) = x^2$. If in addition to the mathematical bent, you have an historical bent, you would add that “function” means what has been, is, and will be understood, beginning with Leibniz’s identification of differentiable functions, continuing to the notion of function in twentieth century set theory and beyond.

In the story of the Mexican family on vacation, “function” refers to any one of the various tasks involved in planning the next best vacation—searching for and gathering receipts and other records; interpreting the receipts and records; figuring out the past; putting forward positions; settling on a view that takes into account the changing desires of each; reaching for policies; interpreting these policies by hypothesizing a range of future possibilities; and finally sharing a decision while taking into account the concrete particularities of current weather, physical health, moods, and finances, as well as the current offer of cultural events in Acapulco.

What is important to notice is that neither the mathematical “function” nor the roles and tasks involved in planning the next vacation are fixed. The uncommon sense of function is on the move, “not something simple and straightforward but something which occurred in a long series of various steps, errors, detours, and corrections.”³¹ This takes a bit of fantasizing, but it is important in order to counter the bogus view of functions that claims that they are fixed, static, and fundamentally incompatible with fantasy. The same is true for the functions of those collaborating to plan the vacation. Their functions are on the move, changing, evolving, as is their appreciation of these same functions. And the same is to be true of the neither simple nor straightforward historical development of functional collaboration.

C. What Is Functional Collaboration?

One of the first opportunities that I had to ponder the question “What is functional collaboration?” was at the defense of my doctoral dissertation at Fordham University, May 1996. My dissertation focused on Lonergan’s two studies of Aquinas between 1938 and 1949,³² but my mentor had insisted on including a final set of comments on the

³¹ From Michael G. Shield’s 1990 translation of *De intellectu et methodo*, titled in English, *Understanding and Method*, at 130-32. The original text is *De intellectu et methodo*, 55. McShane is keen to remind us that Lonergan’s sub-word for “function” emanated from a “systematic understanding” of a long series of “errors, detours, and corrections” by which “function” developed. See note 14 in *FuSe* 15, “The Future of Functional History,” <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/fuse-15.pdf>

³² “The Ethics of Lonergan’s Existential Intellectualism,” <http://www.lonerganresource.com/dissertations.php>

significance of post-1949 writings for the meaning of “existential ethics.” So Gerald McCool, S.J., one of my readers, posed the question to me towards the end of the two-hour defense: “What is Lonergan up to in *Method in Theology*?”³³ The exchange probably lasted a total of three minutes at most—I mentioned something about the apprehension of values in feelings or the two ways of development.³⁴

In any case I remember finding it quite admirable that a respected scholar of nineteenth and twentieth century Thomism was comfortable enough to confess publicly his befuddlement about *Method in Theology*. Whatever Lonergan was “up to” in this book, it did not seem to have precedence in or resonate with the works of Rousselot, Maréchal, Maritain, Gilson, or Rahner, or even, for that matter, in the earlier works of Lonergan. This is not to say that McCool was unaware of the shortcomings of what he calls a “doctrinal tradition,” and that, in McCool’s mind, both Rahner and Lonergan had left behind the Neo-Thomistic movement.³⁵ Rather it was a question about the manner or way of his leaving behind. What had happened to the classical, statistical, genetic, and dialectal methods, the notions of being and objectivity, the four chapters on metaphysics, the possibility of ethics, and the general and special transcendent knowledge of the book *Insight*?³⁶ Could it be, as Rahner himself suggested, that Lonergan had his mind on something more than method in theology, something even interdisciplinary?³⁷

³³ *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990) (hereafter referred to as *Method*).

³⁴ See *Method*, 30-41 and Frederick Crowe, “An Expansion of Lonergan’s Notion of Value,” *Lonergan Workshop*, vol. VII, ed. Fred Lawrence (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 35-58.

³⁵ See “The Explosion of Pluralism: The ‘New Theology’ Crisis,” ch. 9 in *From Unity to Pluralism: The Internal Evolution of Thomism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1989), 200-230. Unlike McCool, who was familiar with the problem of theology as it was posed by Lonergan throughout the 1940s and the 1950s, those of us who did not share that experience might wonder what the big deal was. After all, didn’t Lonergan return to his usual way of thinking and writing after completing *Method in Theology*? Time and talent permitting, we have to do the library work of finding the mess in our area of interest. A few have attempted such work. See the references at note 50 below.

³⁶ See the first paragraph of Philip McShane’s contribution, “What-To-Do?: The Heart of Lonergan’s Ethics,” in this same volume 7.

³⁷ In responding to Lonergan’s article, “Functional Specialties,” 50 *Gregorianum* (1969), 485-505, Karl Rahner wrote: “Die theologische Methodologie Lonergan’s scheint mir so generisch zu sein, daß sie eigentlich auf jede Wissenschaft paßt.” “Kritische Bemerkungen zu B.J.F. Lonergan’s Aufsatz: ‘Functional Specialties in Theology,’” 51 *Gregorianum* (1971), 537. In translation: “Lonergan’s theological methodology seems to me to be so generic that it actually suits every science.” By the time of writing *Method in Theology*, Lonergan knew his proposal was interdisciplinary. See pages

A few years later, while teaching in an interdisciplinary program in Saint Mary's University of Minnesota, I had the opportunity to think about the scope and aim of interdisciplinary programs. In particular, I was asked to collaborate in the design and teaching of courses with titles such as "Our Modern Heritage" and "Great Ideas in Math and Science." In our departmental meetings we had come to an impasse regarding both the selection of texts and our understanding of what it might mean to teach texts "interdisciplinarily."

By the 1970s, social psychology and biochemistry had been recognized as interdisciplinary fields, and many other fields, as well as programs, colleges, and universities founded on interdisciplinary principles, had emerged.³⁸ There was something of a movement toward reintegration of the humanities, both with each other and with the social sciences, using critical rhetoric as a principle of integration that dissolves disciplinary boundaries.³⁹ It was feared, however, that meta-procedures for integration would produce simply another vague metaphysics, or just another specialization among a host of others, and what Julie Klein calls an "epistemic drift" in which criteria and control are determined by economic, political, or pragmatic factors such as committee deadlines for deciding upon topics and ordering books.⁴⁰ Without a common understanding of what constitutes interdisciplinary studies, the label "interdisciplinary" can be applied willy-nilly. Klein writes of the lack of a common understanding amongst members of teaching or research teams: "Members of the same teaching or research team tend to lack formal consensus on a definition of interdisciplinarity, and they rarely engage in philosophical discussion. Different operational and implicit definitions usually emerge from pragmatic discussions."⁴¹ When a high level of integration is desired, a high level of collaboration is required. And when multiple disciplinary aspirations, methods, and objectives are involved, facilitators who are "skilled in methods of inquiry are crucial to the integrative process."⁴² On a similar note, Stephen Toulmin

Method, 22-23, 132, and 366-67; also in the preface to the three lectures on religious studies and theology Lonergan explicitly states that *Method in Theology* was "conceived on interdisciplinary lines." *A Third Collection* (New York, Paulist Press, 1985), 113 (hereafter *A Third Collection*).

³⁸ Some of these programs dated back to the 1950s while others were descendants of the "great books" curriculum founded in the 1930s.

³⁹ Efforts at replacing empirical models with linguistic models is apparent in both the structuralist and the deconstructivist movements, especially in the works of Claude Lévi Strauss, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida. See Julie Klein, *Crossing Boundaries: Knowledge, Disciplinarity and Interdisciplinarity* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), note 60 on page 31 (hereafter *Crossing Boundaries*).

⁴⁰ *Crossing Boundaries*, 14-15.

⁴¹ *Crossing Boundaries*, 219.

⁴² *Ibid.*

describes how the study of muscle fiber might fall within multiple domains:

The behavior of a muscle fiber, for instance, can fall within the domain of biochemistry, electrophysiology, pathology, and thermodynamics, since questions can be asked about it from all four points of view; and in principle the same fiber could be brought within the scope of still other sciences, by making it a topic for (say) quantum-mechanical or psychological questions.⁴³

The ideal set-up would bring biochemists, electrophysiologists, pathologists, and thermodynamicists into dialogue.⁴⁴

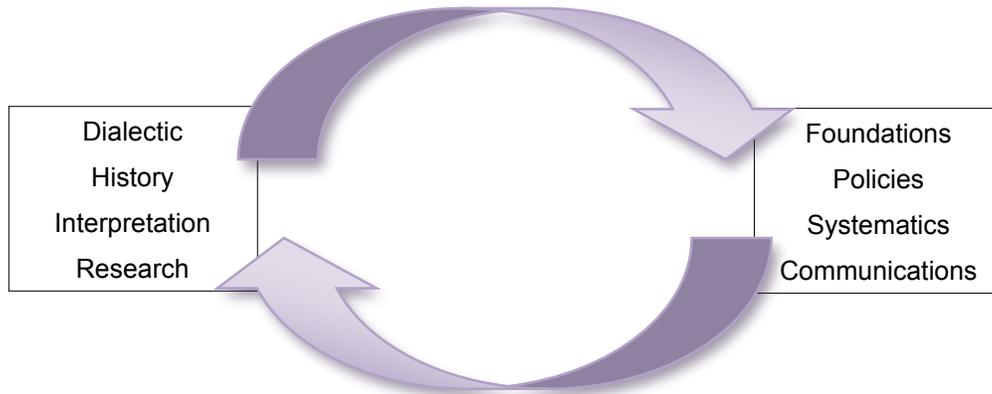
What does this bit of autobiographical ramble have to do with the ethics of functional collaboration? In the story of the Mexican family the cooperation between those who are searching, interpreting, figuring out, putting forward, settling on a view, reaching for policies, interpreting these policies, and sharing a decision that is locally-oriented is an analogy for functional collaboration. Anyone involved in collaborating to plan the next better or best vacation has a function. To arrive at a win-win-win-win-win-win, that is, to creatively recover the best of the past in order to make decisions regarding concrete plans for the happiness of each and all, it makes sense for those involved to divide up the tasks.⁴⁵

⁴³ Stephen Toulmin, *Human Understanding: The Collective Use and Evolution of Concepts* (Princeton, NJ: University of Princeton Press, 1972), 149, quoted in Klein, *Crossing Boundaries*, 49.

⁴⁴ This provides a clue for reading Lonergan's fantastic claim in *Method in Theology* that the primary function of philosophy is "to promote the self-appropriation that cuts to the root of philosophic differences" while its secondary function is to "distinguish, relate, ground several realms of meaning and, no less, ground the methods of sciences and so promote their unification." *Method*, 95. Ian Barbour shows how implicit philosophical commitments inescapably underpin stances in other disciplines. See Ian Barbour *Issues in Science and Religion* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1966). Philip McShane explores foundational philosophical issues of botany and musicology in chapters 1 and 3 of *The Shaping of the Foundations: Being at Home in the Transcendental Method* (Washington, DC: University of America Press, 1976). See also note 76 below.

⁴⁵ While research at CERN using the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) and research on linguistics in the Harvard University library remain quite different endeavors, there is to be a progressive convergence in the tasks of interpreting and putting forward histories, and the few dialectic and foundational elders are omnidisciplinary characters, future all-brights, "big men [and women!] who move about." *CWL* 10, 206. Big historians will write big histories in which "protons and pansies and personalities are woven together in the policies of Marx. The chemistry of steam is put on the rails of capitalism and Joyce and Lenin can share a train of thought. Music can become the musak of marketing." Philip McShane, *Cantower VIII*, "Slopes: An Encounter," <http://www>.

The solution to Klein's concern about epistemic drift, as well as the concern about vague metaphysics, is to spend long days and nights on apparently trifling problems, which is a culturally acceptable thing to do in the study of Newtonian and post-Newtonian physics. The collaboration exemplified by the private conversations between experimental physicists and theoretical physicists⁴⁶ is potentially luminous, and becomes actually luminous when each collaborator not only understands his or her own task in and through the double attention of generalized empirical method,⁴⁷ but also knows about the structure of the whole collaborative endeavor, including its street value. He or she knows that it is inefficient to enter into debates about first philosophy or random dialectics regarding philosophers or philosophical schools. The results will be progressive and cumulative in the sense that the December 2012 vacation is going to be better than December 2011, and wrongheaded postures will not be cycled forward but cycled out of future vacation planning.⁴⁸



philipmcshane.ca/cantower8.pdf at page 14. See also Terry Quinn's comments on the foundations of arts, sciences, and technologies in this same volume 7.

⁴⁶ Lonergan provides the example of the knowledge and skills of the experimental physicist, who alone handles the cyclotron, as compared with the knowledge of the theoretical physicist, who alone determines which experiments are worth trying. *Method*, 126.

⁴⁷ "Generalized empirical method operates on a combination of both the data of sense and the data of consciousness: it does not treat of objects without taking into account the corresponding subject; it does not treat of the subject's operations without taking into account the corresponding object." Bernard Lonergan, "Religious Knowledge," *A Third Collection*, 141.

⁴⁸ The hope is that the following diagram, or something resembling it, will become, like the periodic table, part of the educational experience. See chapter 32, "Putting Our Global Minding in Order," *Introducing Critical Thinking*, John Benton, Alessandra Drage, and Philip McShane (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Axial Publishing, 2005), 124-127.

IV. Conclusion

Are we *de facto* committed to functional collaboration? Is there a way to choose the comfort of divisions by topics, periods, figures, and approaches while repudiating functional collaboration? These questions have an academic sound to them. What if I were to ask: Would you like an all-expense paid vacation? Besides getting a bit personal, the question is, in a sense, a “no-brainer.” We might disagree on where to go and what to do, but I imagine you would gladly take an all-paid vacation. I certainly would!

If we let “vacation” symbolize “leisure time to become more human,” again we might agree. Things get tricky, however, because there is an axially neurotic part of our busy, non-livable lives, which is dead-set against becoming more human. What Lonergan calls “the longer cycle of decline”⁴⁹ has maimed our molecules, not only making improbable the joy of lovingly becoming adequate to the basics of sane economics which, when implemented, will lead to more leisure time to become more human, but also making it quite difficult to fathom the billion-year project of babbling babies becoming more human.

So, yes, it is much easier to side with Plato and maintain, implicitly at least, that the “Good Itself” somehow hovers above or beyond past, present, and future medical nutritional therapy in surgery than to hold and be held by this truth: “ethics as functional collaboration is the way to go.” The ethical dilemma to be faced by each of us in his or her own biography is how and what to do to move forward while anticipating future achievements. The potentially dreadful question we now face is not so much “Should we try to collaborate?” but rather “How can we move forward individually and communally in these very early days of functional collaboration?”⁵⁰

⁴⁹ See *Insight* (CWL 3), 251-259.

⁵⁰ Experiencing the need for collaboration and understanding the experience are related, but not the same. Do the facts sit there staring us in the face? Charles Sanders Peirce, considering possible reasons for doubting the existence of a personal God, writes: “The only answer that I can at present make is that facts that stand before our face and eyes and stare us in the face are far from being, in all cases, the ones most easily discerned. That has been remarked from time immemorial.” “The Law of Mind,” in *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, ed. Justus Buchler (New York, Dover Publication, 1955), 352. Bruce Anderson (“The Evident Need for Specialization in Visual Arts Studies” in the *Journal of Macrodynamical Analysis* vol. 6 [2011]) and Terry Quinn (“Invitation to Functional Collaboration: Dynamics of Progress in the Sciences, Technologies, and Arts” in this volume 7) have both labored to get the facts staring us in the face to be discerned. The trailblazer in taking up the challenge has been Philip McShane, who has been proclaiming the need for functional collaboration for some forty years in areas such as musicology, economics, linguistics, physics, and theology. See *The Shaping of the Foundations: Being at Home in the Transcendental Method* (Washington, DC:

My answer to the first should-question is that it is ugly and inefficient, and therefore unethical not to invite students and other loved ones to at least notice that we are not doomed to repeating the same old family vacation or the same old eclectic academic gatherings. Gaily attending such annual meetings, workshops, and conferences, that are not forward-leaning, adventure-anticipating efforts to seriously ask “What next?” is not ethical in the Aristotelian sense of concretely caring for people suffering from sick educations and sick economies. Adventure waits, but Marie flies to Japan,⁵¹ Jaime flies to Paris, and it appears all is well as the carnival-like⁵² show goes on.

My answer to the second question is that we are to crawl, not race, humbly and patiently. Most of us do not understand the dynamics of luminously planning better vacations for the human family, but like those collaborating in the rescue of the thirty-three miners, we can believe in the project without understanding how it works.⁵³ It stretches

University Press of America, 1976); *Economics for Everyone* (Halifax: Axial Press, 1998); *A Brief History of Tongue* (Halifax: Axial Press, 1998); *Loneragan’s Challenge to the University and the Economy* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1980); *The Redress of Poise: The End of Loneragan’s Work*; *Loneragan’s Standard Model of Effective Global Enquiry*, together with *Method in Theology: Revisions and Implementations*, the Cantower series, the FieldNocturne Cantower series, the Sofdaware series, and the Quodlibet series, all of which may be found on McShane’s website <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/>

⁵¹ See Jean-François Lyotard’s “Marie Goes to Japan,” *Postmodern Fables*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 3-15.

⁵² “My interests take me to conferences on a variety of different subjects, including neurobiology, artificial intelligence, psychology, linguistics, and a number of others, and I am frequently struck by the differences in intellectual level and discursive style among different academic disciplines. I believe that as far as general intellectual level is concerned, the field of ‘literary theory’ is probably the lowest I have experienced. The carnival-like atmosphere of the annual meetings of the Modern Language Association contrasts sharply with, for instance, the atmosphere of conferences on neurobiology.” John Searle, “Is There a Crisis in American Higher Education?” 60 *Partisan Review* (1993), 707.

⁵³ *Experto crede*. Reproducing the efforts that lead to the discovery of a framework for efficient and beautiful collaboration is beyond me. Actually collaborating is also beyond most of us. This has been an important lesson of the e-seminar “Functional Specialization,” which, for those with eyes to see and ears to hear, is intimating “a massive sickness and need of axial humanity to re-globalize the wondrous darkness of spirited primates pacing and mating and poisoning under the moon and the clusters of clusters of ten billion galaxies.” Philip McShane, *Cantower XL*, “Functional Foundations,” <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/cantower40.pdf> at page 14. I comment on the enlightening failure of the first four e-seminars in “Risking Positioning,” an essay posted on McShane’s website, <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/fuse-17d.pdf> at pages 7-11.

our neuromolecular imagination to fathom progressive and cumulative results mediated by a team of men and women at home in the periodic table of meaning and culture, a dream team “sloping and cycling that will slowly raise human consciousness to ‘this still higher integration of human living,’”⁵⁴ a mosh pit of very well-meaning meaners and very well-caring carers “to undo the mischief brought about by alienation and ideology.”⁵⁵ Our lack of fantasy, coupled with our lack of knowledge of our lack of fantasy, has us hostage, writing, speaking, and thinking inefficiently, in a lone-ranger style that is quite hard to shake.⁵⁶ In the academic business of teaching, delivering conference papers, and publishing scholarly books and articles, an ethos of looking backwards stifles the possibility of *identifying*⁵⁷ the absence of collaboration. Serious understanding implies dissemination and recycling, that is, communicating timely ideas to colleagues and, if we are not simply to pat ourselves on the academic back, somehow implementing timely ideas for the sake of the masses who walk daily in street markets, hope to avoid trips to the doctor, and long for extended holidays. Do you, I, we really care enough for the *anawim*⁵⁸ to humbly and patiently crawl forward? That is the core ethical question, which, for those who proclaim a Christian tradition and proclaim themselves part of it, is also the heart of the Gospel: “Whatever you do for the least, you do for me.”

What are we to do? Who are “we” anyway? Whoever we are, if we are in the business of educating and being educated, we are called to a radical humility in classroom and print. If the task of updating and implementing Aristotelian ethics is too much, then we invite, humbly and Socratic-ally, younger generations to do the exercises that we did not or could not do; maybe we can even exercise alongside them. This is the

The e-seminar contributions are available on the Society for the Globalization of Effective Methods of Evolving (SGEME) website <http://www.sgeme.org/>

⁵⁴ Philip McShane, “The Possibility of Cultural Ethics,”

<http://www.philipmcshane.ca/cantower18.pdf> at page 16. The reference within the quote is to *CWL* 3, 655.

⁵⁵ *Method*, 361.

⁵⁶ Am I also a lone ranger? What, I ask with a grin, am I doing in this essay? What is the “function” of this essay “Ethics as Functional Collaboration”? It is a functional mess! There is a dominant tone of “Hey look at this!” which is the *per se* posture of a functional researcher speaking indirectly to a functional interpreter. But I am all over the place—interpreting Aristotle, doing random dialectics and autobiographical positioning, reaching for relevant pragmatic truths, and dabbling in direct speech. See also the commentary on would-be functions in Husserl and Derrida in Philip McShane, *Pastkeynes Pastmodern Economics: A Fresh Pragmatism* (Nova Scotia: Axial Press, 2002), 60-66.

⁵⁷ Identification implies performance (*CWL* 3, 582-583), in this case a withdrawal from the usual performance in order to perform differently albeit badly.

⁵⁸ *Anawim* is Hebrew for “poor,” “humble,” “afflicted.”

challenge that confronts anyone committed to thinking about whatever moves him or her, be it foreign film, conceptual or graffiti art, urban design, classical rock and roll, wine making, technologies of communication and information, or “Great Ideas in Math and Science.”⁵⁹ Those of us who proclaim to be doing something vaguely resembling ethics either face up to this challenge—and all that it implies—or we are left not just thinking, teaching, writing, and publishing as neo-Platonist, ignoring the concrete and particular sick patient, sick climate, sick economy, or sick student, but also heading ourselves and our would-be loved ones for a ditch.⁶⁰

Can we begin to fantasize a change that will eventually impact flows of goods and services? There is an effective way to cut down on the rescue time the way they did in San José, Chile.⁶¹ If the human family is to “complete the circle”⁶² it will be through collaboration.

⁵⁹ The title of a course I taught at St. Mary’s University of Minnesota, 1998-2000.

⁶⁰ “If the analyst suffers from a scotoma, he will communicate it to the analysand; similarly, if cosmopolis itself suffers from the general bias of common sense in any of its manifestations, then the blind will be leading the blind and both will head for a ditch.” *CWL* 3, 265. General bias is evident in large core courses where students studying bio-engineering, accounting, history, journalism, architecture, business administration, psychology, etc. are lumped together. The lowest common denominator is common sense, which lends itself to the analysis of “cases” or “ethical dilemmas.” Such analysis is not stupid, but it is pre-Aristotelian and has very little to do with hugging history. What I am proposing is simply being honest about that with ourselves, our colleagues, and our students (where I teach, these courses are considered by most students “de relleno,” which is Spanish for “fillers”), perhaps cunningly finding ways to allow students to teach us something new!

⁶¹ Similarly, Philip McShane asks: “Can we gently go with the flow, speed it up: can tow-ers emerge, people who tow gently the massive confused cultural reflection towards a functional circulation so that a vortex movement begins to stir in the turn to the idea?” *Cantower I*, “Function and History,” <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/cantower1.pdf> at page 14.

⁶² See note 24 above. Each one of us, displaced in our own city, town, or country house, needs to thoughtfully read an attitude of concern into such statements as “Begin where you will, complete the circle.” The circle in question in this essay is “the Circle of Life / And it moves us all / Through despair and hope / Through faith and love / Till we find our place / On the path unwinding / In the Circle / The Circle of Life.” “Circle of Life,” music by Elton John, lyrics by Tim Rice.

Epilogue: “Good Will Hunting”

When someone wills to be cured, he begins to cogitate about how this can be realized,

and through such reflection he concludes that he can be cured by a doctor, and so he wills it.

But since he did not always actually will to have health, he must begin to will to have health by something moving him.⁶³

And there before the Holy Vessel, dancing with girt-up robes, the humble Psalmist moved, less than a king, and more, in his wild prancing.⁶⁴

Mario Medina Mejia, a Chilean geologist, said many miners have returned underground after close calls, and he compared it to sailors who survive shipwrecks only to ply the waves again. Certainly some of the miners will return to the mines after the near-tragedy; after all, it is their life, their livelihood, and their culture. We in the business of academics are very much like them with regard to the underground mines of course design, committee meetings, publications, presentations in conferences, and advising graduate thesis: “It’s our life, our culture, the way we make our living.” Who is to up-girt our robe so that we might dance wildly, less than a king, and more?

Ethics as functional collaboration is about hunting for the good will and willingness to dance with girt-up robes and rescue millions of people trapped in the underground mine of bewilderment, mere animality, and a maze of philosophies, theologies, and pedagogies, not to mention beaten down by financial hardships caused by widespread stupidity, dishonesty, and greed. Do we actually will to cure and to rescue, or has the usual business, “our life, our culture, the way we make a living” effectively cut off and cut out fantasy? What is the “something” that is to move us to begin to will a cure and embrace the global rescue mission? How do we give birth to a team of dancers, there before the Holy Vessel, whose life is a self-donating, forward-leaning, “what next?” care for “the mass of men leading lives of quiet desperation”?⁶⁵

⁶³ *Summa Theologica*, I-II, Q. 9, art. 4 “Is the Will Moved by an Exterior Principle?”

⁶⁴ Dante Alighieri, *The Purgatorio*, trans. John Ciardi (New York: Mentor, 1961), 114.

⁶⁵ Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (1854).

In quiet desperation, perhaps in quiet displacement,⁶⁶ you might find yourself, as do I, resonating with Will Hunting (Matt Damon) in the movie “Good Will Hunting.” When Will, a brilliant janitor working at MIT, instigates a brawl in the local playground, the judge sentences him to therapy. After chasing off the first five therapists, Will meets Sean Maguire (Robin Williams), who is from Will’s neighborhood in Boston. Will is brilliant and can play the footnote game as well as (if not better than) Sean, but he is lacking, you might say, foundations.

One day Will and Sean are seated in an empty park and looking out over a small pond in which a group of schoolchildren ride the famous Swan Boats. Will, in his typical sarcastic and hostile way, says to Sean. “So what’s with this place? You have a swan fetish? Is this something you’d like to talk about?” Sean then calls Will on his pretentiousness:

[I]f I asked you about women I’m sure you could give me a syllabus of your personal favorites, and maybe you’ve been laid a few times too. But you couldn’t tell me how it feels to wake up next to a woman and be truly happy. If I asked you about war you could refer me to a bevy of fictional and non-fictional material, but you’ve never been in one. You’ve never held your best friend’s head in your lap and watched him draw his last breath, looking to you for help. And if I asked you about love I’d get a sonnet, but you’ve never looked at a woman and been truly vulnerable. Known that someone could kill you with a look. That someone could rescue you from grief. ... And you wouldn’t know about real loss, because that only occurs when you lose something you love more than yourself, and you’ve never dared to love anything that much.⁶⁷

Later, after weeks of meetings, Sean finally is able to penetrate Will’s hostile and sarcastic defense. One day, looking him square in the eyes, he says to Will: “It is not your fault.” Will replies: “I know.” Again Sean says to Will: “It is not your fault.” Will replies: “Quit fucking with me.” Sean: “It is not your fault.”

There is no shame in admitting, as did Gerald McCool in May of 1996, that functional collaboration is a known unknown. However, there is great shame in denying others, be they friends, students, or colleagues, the possibility of adventure.

Lucky for Will he meets Sean, who helps him to meet himself and to move to San Francisco to risk loving Skylar (Minnie Driver). Lucky

⁶⁶ Lonergan writes that “foundational reality, as distinct from its expression, is conversion.” *Method*, 267. Conversion to hugging history and her-story, neither of which is already-back-then, is a massively displacing conversion.

⁶⁷ “Good Will Hunting” – The Script Source, <http://www.thescriptsource.net/Scripts/Good%20Will%20Hunting.pdf>

for you if you meet yourself while meeting Will or Sean, Emma Bovary, Dostoyevsky's underground man, or Victor Frankenstein; or Rita (Julie Walters) or Dr. Frank Bryant (Michael Caine) in the movie "Educating Rita," Coronel Frank Slade (Al Pacino) in the movie "Scent of a Woman," or the lovely Sue (Ahney Her) or the bitter, gruff lone ranger Walt Kowalksi (Clint Eastwood) in the movie "Gran Torino." Lucky for you if you meet your cub Simba self⁶⁸ or your King Lear self:

Come, let's away to prison;
 We two, alone will sing like birds I' the cage.
 When thou dost ask me blessing I'll kneel down
 And ask thee forgiveness. So we'll live
 And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
 At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
 Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too⁶⁹

"Ask thee forgiveness." Normatively, I know, I ought not to be beyond my own horizon and I should love Sophia, for that is the root meaning of my professional title "philosopher." But I have not loved her dearly. Could repentance of rationalization and surrender, "an act of good will following the insights of intelligence and the pronouncements of reasonableness,"⁷⁰ help unwarmp my looking backwards and convert me into a forward-leaner, anticipating an adventure similar to the rescuing of miners or planning a family vacation?⁷¹ How am I to listen to and speak to the many Wills and Skylars that live in my classrooms and neighborhoods? I dare say: autobiographically, heartily, and "desde los pies a la cabeza."⁷²

Increasingly, words of wisdom spoken by the elder King Lear or therapist Sean, speaking in their own names, are to reach and heal our Will-wounds and free us up to will a cure, to pack up and go west (or east) in the hopes of loving someone who can rescue us from our grief,

⁶⁸ *Nants ingonyama bagithi baba* ("There comes a lion") / *Sithi uhmmm ingonyama* ("Oh yes, it's a lion"). Lyrics from "Circle of Life," music by Elton John, lyrics by Tim Rice.

⁶⁹ *King Lear*, ed. R. A. Foakes, The Arden Shakespeare (Surrey: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1997), 365.

⁷⁰ *CWL* 3, 722.

⁷¹ Without dialectical positioning and the direct speech of the forward specialties, which by and large do not yet exist, the best of present research, interpretation, and history "are in vain, for they fail to mature." *Method*, 355. A few brave souls attempted dialectical positioning in November 2011 as part of the fourth e-seminar. Their essays are available as *FuSe A-Q*, <http://www.philipmshane.ca/fuse.html>

⁷² This is a phrase I use with my students which means "from your feet to the top of your head." The phrase comes from a popular song, "De Pies a Cabeza," by the group Maná.

and to begin to fantasize life abundant for our students and children, as well as their great-grandchildren.

Such foundational talk is foreign to journals, publishers, search committees, classrooms, and professional gatherings. Inasmuch as foundational talk is pivotal for ongoing ordering and judging of the dream team,⁷³ foundations is first philosophy, but it is a rolling first,⁷⁴ and a rolling thirst for a well of water springing up to eternal life.⁷⁵ Foundational talk is to be present in all zones of inquiry⁷⁶ and rescue the child's spontaneous "whatting"⁷⁷ and natural desire to hug the cosmos. That is your heart's desire, your core-zone, and my "corazón."⁷⁸ In *good time* foundational speech of foundational characters is to cycle, cure tongues, flood hearts, redeem longly cycled linguistic decline, and become the talk of the town. How now, then, to begin to grow, masterful images, "pure formulations"?

*Old kettles, old bottles, and a broken can,
Old iron, old bones, old rags, that raving slut
Who keeps the till. Now that my ladder's gone,
I must I lie down where all the ladders start,
In the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart.*⁷⁹

⁷³ Relate this to "judging well" above at note 8.

⁷⁴ "The complex manner is to conceive foundations as what is first in any ordered set. If the ordered set consists in propositions, then the first will be the logically first propositions. If the ordered set consists in an ongoing, developing reality, then the first is the immanent and operative set of norms that guides each forward step in the process." *Method*, 269-270.

⁷⁵ See *John* 4:14.

⁷⁶ In "Invitation to Functional Collaboration: Dynamics of Progress in the Sciences, Technologies, and Arts" in this same volume 7, Terry Quinn elaborates on this point with regard to understanding the present state of development of biology and the abundance of opposed views on biology. He notes that in the study of butterfly biochemistry personal foundations and heuristics are implicit in the orientation, questioning, and desiring of the biologist.

⁷⁷ In "An Ethics of Philosophic Work" in this same volume 7, Robert Henman suggests reading "foundations" as spontaneous procedure, what: children do, and what would rescue us from working in isolation. (The colon in the immediately prior sentence represents a pause in the rhythm of speaking, in the rhythm of reading, in the rhythm of thinking.) See note 18 above and the text that follows. The language of "hugging the cosmos" is classroom language I would use with Will and Skylar. If your "scholarly" self needs a footnote, see the beginning of the first paragraph, *CWL* 3, 442.

⁷⁸ This is Spanish for "heart."

⁷⁹ William Butler Yeats, "The Circus Animals' Desertion," quoted in *The Rag and Bone Shop of the Heart*, ed. Robert Bly, James Hillman, and Michael Meade (New York: Harper, 1992), xvii.

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