

SGEME 2 - COMMUNICATIONS: Effectively Defining Audiences

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My original project in this essay was to focus on my own on-going work on effectively defining the audience for educational reform in the Halifax, Nova Scotia, area, but now, at the beginning of the new year, it seems best to spread my and our interests. First of all, my own ongoing work is precisely that: there is much to be done before I present the results at the Vancouver Conference of July 5th-9th. Secondly, there is the need and desire of some among us to envisage strategies of implementing the general policy or attitude, “something needs to be done about Lonergan’s effectiveness”. So, I divide my reflection here into two parts: a first general part followed by some account of my own interest.

1. The General Project

McShane’s SGEME 1 gives a broad context. I wish to raise questions of smaller and personal contexts. These will range, in the group, from reaches of full broadness, such as McShane envisages, to simple interest in promoting changes for the better. My own present effort lies in the middle. What of yours?

The simple interest is already a source of effective change, in so far as you are informed of the existence of SGEME, indeed a member, and you casually “make it a topic” (MIT, 253). How casually? Well, to the extent that you encourage people to notice that we can’t go on just talking, or talking academically in a way that is altogether alien to Plato’s attitude in the original academy. So: you talk to someone who agrees even

slightly, saying something like, “What are we to do?” “Well”, says you, “you could join **SGEME!**”

Some of you are already “doing something”. I mention no names at this stage, but part of our effort is to manifest and relate such doings, even to have members write a SGEME essay for us about their doings or hopes of doing. The relating is important, a relating that shows the need for **implementation**, which is the core problem among those at present interested and active in Lonergan studies. We’ll get on to that shortly.

But first it is important to think about the mentality of “doing something” and of implementation generally. Lonergan’s mentality was always one bent towards concrete effects, but late in life he began to use the language of *Praxis*. That language leads to thinking not only about praxis, but to thinking in a certain style of concern: a thinking within that praxis mentality. This style is quite foreign to the mentality of “the observer”, the observer interested but not involved: the Monday morning quarterback perhaps, but even before the game. The ongoing work of Darlene O’Leary illustrates the challenge; she advocates “concerned citizenship” but it goes against current trends, even current trends of government.

What we are looking towards, looking forward to, is a shift to responsible thinking and talking as an established mode of behaviour. If you think of our everyday conversation this is quite a leap. Think further of zones of reporting, be it newscasting or research reporting. They fall short of street-effectiveness, indeed they seem to assume that it is no concern of theirs. Thinking about this shows the power of Lonergan’s perspective on implementation whether his simple early version or his late functional suggestions. But what I am getting towards here is the suggestion that our interest in

“doing something” relates first and foremost to a change in our own mentality, one that would, in a very up-front way, effect our conversations with “observational” types.

This, then, is a way that we align ourselves with SGEME without further active involvement, but note that it is an important self-involvement. It leads us to the beginning of new culture, and to the beginning of a personal *Praxisweltanschauung*.

Next, it is important to note, with regard to Lonergan studies, that its present state, in which comparative and descriptive work dominate, deprive people of the beginning and the development of a personal world view, so depriving the universe of a unity: “the universe can bring forth its own unity in the concentrated form of a single intelligent view.”(*Insight*, 544). The culture of study is such that Lonergan’s view is named in the context of the naming of other views, and the person so engaged is liable to talk of Lonergan’s views in relation to others’ views without referring to their own personal view, much less exposing it - as, for instance, the second half of MIT 250 demands.

So, I move from the consideration of an attitude of serious practicality to further additions to ones view, IF one is so inclined. The group is very diverse, at different stages in relation to developing a personal view out of Lonergan’s pointers. The diversity, however, offers possibility of sub-groups of different interests, different stages, different talents. I am interested in suggestions regarding this. Further, I would note that the question of different talents relates to different functional orientations, but I wont go into that issue for the present. Still, suggestions can include such functional connecting.

McShane emphasizes the aim of generating a community that shares a standard model, but I would emphasize that he is not looking to the SGEME group to rise to this level. What we reach for is strategies of encouragement of a change in Lonergan study

and teaching that would lead towards a new generation emerging that is competent, to some degree “at the level of the times” (see MIT, 350-1). These strategies have to reach down into school education: this is Lonergan’s point when he talks about school physics (**Topics in Education**, Vol. 6, 145) and of *haute* vulgarization (Vol. 6, 121 155). Can we find, suggest to each other, strategies that have a serious chance of being effective at various levels, levels that range from single local school-teachers to large Lonergan gatherings?

It is important to pause descriptively over the present state of Lonergan studies in regard to some aspects of the core problem: McShane has been dealing with it in a larger explanatory context. Getting Lonergan’s view into the streets, the schools, the banks, and government: that has not been an up-front concern of the main body of Lonergan studies and its output.

A central feature of this activity is that it functions outside the normal activity of the university’s departments of the natural and social sciences. Its focus on philosophy and theology is a further detriment as such areas lack any serious orientation towards theory. I add this brief description to highlight the need for a move towards collaboration that will increase the probabilities of the emergence of theory. It is worth noticing that the students interested in Lonergan’s works that come from the university, for the most part come from Philosophy, Religious Studies, and Theology departments, where theory is usually absent. The same students who may go on to graduate level studies will usually do so in the field of religious studies, philosophy or theology, again where there is the

absence of theory. This ongoing pattern has since 1957 inhibited the implementation of generalized empirical method¹ into the departments of the natural and social sciences.

This research that I am presently carrying out is a small effort to begin the process of offsetting that pattern of activity which presently consists of comparative and descriptive work. It is hoped that this model of research can assist others in analyzing the sociodynamics that function within the many diverse institutions that participate in the prolongation of the Axial Period.

2. A Report on Research in Process

Over the past two years I have participated in two conferences focusing on collaboration and implementation in education. That experience has helped me focus on the deeper issues surrounding Bernard Lonergan's GEM. The implementation of generalized empirical method would seem to require a methodical model that provides the researcher with a means of understanding schemes of recurrence.² In response to the lack of a method to implement GEM I developed the following research project.

Schemes of recurrence are perpetuated by the development of a societal organization that functions interdependently to meet an ongoing social need.³ The research that I am undertaking is designed to locate points of insertion into current

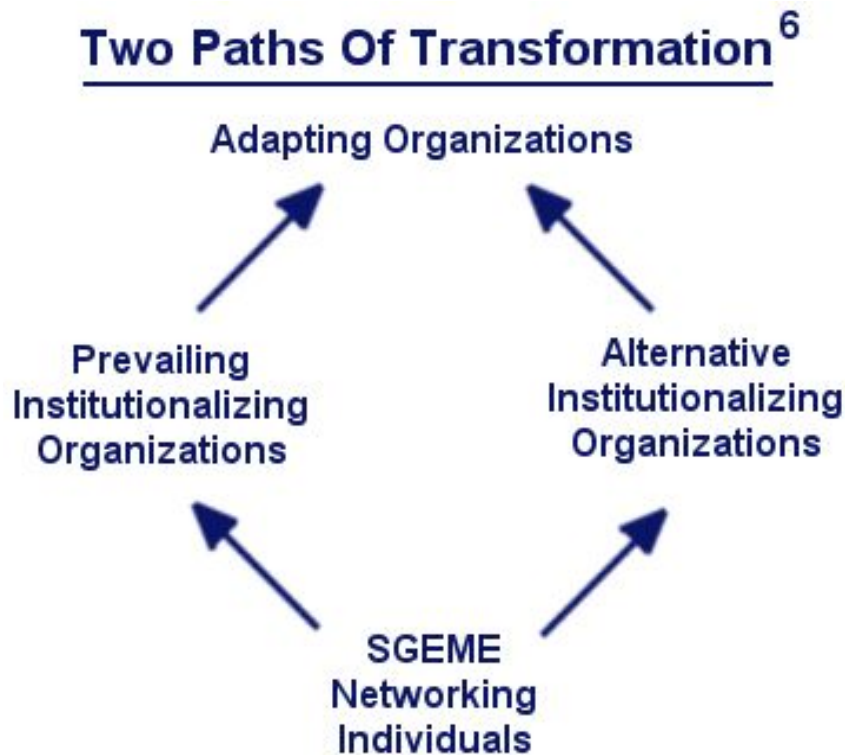
¹ Without a theoretic background one reads Lonergan's works or any serious theoretic work from a common sense context. One can read/repeat the words and intuit that understanding has occurred. This can develop into a pseudo-linguistic expression masking as understanding to the unscientific reader and babble to the serious natural scientist.

² Bernard Lonergan, **Insight: A Study of Human Understanding**, CWL 3, University of Toronto Press, 1992, chapter 4, section 2.2. Philip McShane, **Randomness, Statistics and Emergence**, Gill MacMillan, 1972. "Some important pieces are still missing" into clues and, further, into a methodological orientation towards the ever-growing data of evolution theory. @ Page 206. The missing pieces within the context of research into the evolution of the education cycle relate to the unanalyzed relationships of the cycle which would yield the possibility for development.

³ Jonathan Turner, **Human Institutions: a Theory of Societal Evolution**; Rowman & Littlefield Pub., USA, 2003, page 14. See also **Talcott Parsons: On Institutions and Social Evolution**; Edited by Leon H. Mayhew, University of Chicago Press, 1982, pages 52-55 on foundations of social institutions.

schemes of education that may have a notable probability of transforming the outcome of such schemes. By locating points of insertion into such schemes of recurrence it is hoped that individuals or groups can interject, in a seeding fashion, glimpses of the Childout Principle.⁴

The diagram following offers two paths of transforming institutions; 1) to work within the prevailing institution, and 2) to develop alternative institutions that offset the prevailing institution. The issue facing **SGEME**, which I added to Lin's diagram, "is, at present, the concrete promotion of sensitivity, among Lonergan students, to the inattention – including our own – to "IMPLEMENTATION" as being of the essence of Lonergan's view of metaphysics".⁵



3. Concluding Remarks

⁴ See www.philipmcshane.ca/eldorede-01 ARe Forming Teachers of Themselves@.

⁵ Quoted from an email by Philip McShane to the Skipper Website group.

⁶ Nan Lin, *Social Capital: A Theory of Social Structure and Action*, Cambridge University Press, 2001.

The society, SGEME, in as much as it is an effort to offset the neglect of efforts to seriously implement Lonergan's challenge to implement, is focused, in Part 1 here, on the implementation of the beginnings of an adequate metaphysics of you and I. Such an initial implementation requires a gradual transformation of ourselves and institutions, both those now existing and those that will emerge in the future. The research described in Part 2 is an effort to provide one method of carrying on that work. This research is a response to the question: How do we transform the outcomes of present schemes of recurrence? In order to initiate such transformation it is necessary first to understand the scheme, the audience if you will. An analogy is the failure of the past 500 years of colonialism. The destruction and arrested development of various global cultural groups was due to the fact that neither group understood the other, and in most cases lacked the openness or desire to do so. Present schemes of recurrence are interlocked groups of people to which GEM and the Childout Principle are foreign. The time is ripe to sow the seed of asking ourselves in a new mode: Who are we? But at the same time to the question emerges regarding the schemes in which we live: What are these institutions? Present schemes of recurrence are not going to "ask" us who we are with a bent towards self-identification. Hence my subtitle: *Affectively Defining Audiences* so that the transformation is not one of perpetuating blocked and arrested development, but of opening windows to development. Those familiar with the diagram on page 48 of **Method in Theology** will notice the way in which we could be helped by that diagram in "reading" the interplay of the two parts.

The alternate route displayed in Lin's diagram in some way fits the operation of SGEME. The long term outcome of SGEME is to dissolve self-neglect as schemes

slowly are transformed. It is, in the main, something that is presently outside the reach of the Lonergan School and outside present educational institutions. The outcome is to eventually transform what is presently main stream. In July 2010, at the Vancouver Conference, I will present an analysis of one particular set of educational schemes of recurrence that can function as a developing model for effectively defining other sets of recurrence-schemes.

Following on the theme of sharing my project with you, I ask for your comments on your project, and reports or suggestions that will be posted as **SGEME 3: Present Activities and Further Suggestions**. Send to me from the SGEME website: SGEME.org.