

November 11, 2010

To: Participants of June 2010 BC Meeting:

We are spokespersons for three groups (some overlapping) which have been conducting both internet and personal exchanges on Lonergan studies and outreach, some for several years. The three groups we represent are SGEME, which reported at the Boston College (BC) June meeting, the Lonergan_L discussion group, also known as the Skipperlist, and the Society for the Study of Insight (SSI). (See website addresses/links below.)

Our concerted aims correspond in great part to what was discussed at BC and reported in the minutes. And so we come forward here in an effort to further explore, develop, and implement the *reaching* evident in the "BC proposal" and in the concomitant intentions of our own work in the above three groups. To this end, let us offer two threads here:

First thread, as suggested at the BC meeting, let us take full advantage of web opportunities and open a limited-participant blog or web-planning place so we can communicate informally with this goal in mind: an emergent, collaborative, and concerted-to-be-formality that is mainly concerned with providing a relatively singular voice for such outreach. (The SGEME website address below can host such a blog, but we are open to another location at your suggestion.)

Second thread, the rest of this document brings our brief remarks to some interests and concerns that are expressed in the BC minutes.

Here, we explore some general ideas with the hope of avoiding as much as possible "in-house" problems that invariably crop up in "Lonergan" discussions. Our present concern is that we bring our outreach efforts into concert to gain an interactive and more formal venue for implementing Lonergan's contributions to understanding ourselves in history.

Response to BC Minutes and Explorations

Much of the BC reports and speculations focused on the unstructured nature of the "Lonergan enterprise." As noted there, Lonergan was not a fan of plans. We believe the reference was to his personal involvement, however, and not to what is called for, in this case, in bringing more organization to his contributions for the purpose of outreach. If so, it falls on those who understand various aspects of Lonergan's contributions to follow up on that work.

Among many, many examples, in MIT Lonergan distinguishes policy making, planning, and the execution of the plans (365-67). Also, *Method in Theology* was to a large extent a descriptive introduction to, and commentary on, Lonergan's 1969 *Gregorianum* article that appeared in

chapter 5 of that book. Lonergan's conviction is clear--about the importance of the division of labour that he had creatively identified in 1965.

Taken as a whole, then, one might say that the long-time isolated nature of individual Lonergan scholars and institutes, coupled with the comprehensive-ness of his work, now call for a closer look at collaborative planning and organization with outreach in mind.

A hint at that collaboration/organization comes from John Dadosky who said:

I draw an analogy between Aquinas and Lonergan. Where are the Aquinas institutes? What bolstered (the growth of Aquinas studies) was the Pope getting behind Aquinas. I hope that something similar could happen for Lonergan centres. . . . I anticipate that there will be a dialectical unfolding of Lonergan studies – hermeneutic – the emergence of different schools and interpretations of Lonergan. My hope is that we will be surprised. The more urgent need is to get Lonergan to take hold in the mainstream philosophical world. (BC 2010 meeting minutes)

We can name many of the hindrances that block our way into “the mainstream philosophical world,” all of which we need to discuss and work on to take down those barriers systematically. Let us begin that dialogue on the proposed blog.

Many further rich observations were made at the June meeting for addressing the challenges facing the world as a whole and the Lonergan movement in particular. The observations clearly point to a concerted and concrete movement. Let us for convenience here, then, label the resulting contributive view as *Insight and Functional Specialization* (IFS).

What it seems we are all hoping for is some sort of global association—again, let us call it IFS for the moment. Such an organization, should we implement, will be formal and/or informal, as needed. It will function in great part using the internet, again, as was often suggested at the BC meeting. It will benefit from having the basic structure of any organization, such as a chairperson(s) and a core executive committee, with working groups as we develop specific outreachings. The name of the organization is a secondary question with “mainstream” overtones to which we return below. However, we will take our knowledge of and identity with method and the functional specialties in MIT as our self-reflective core and develop both internal education about these core issues and subgroups or committees for outreach, according to our needs.

To meet our challenge, the function of our newly emerging organization would be twofold. *First*, we would reach and hold another more defined level of rich interchanging of ideas internally, keeping FS, a refined regard for theory, our mission, and our developments within it, as a “topic of conversation.” (We can begin informally with our blog.)

Second, from a loosely-developed but concerted front with a single name, we can begin to explore and develop effective means of outreach—of communicating those efforts to individuals and/or groups. Generally, we could cultivate collaboration between those individuals or groups in fields, organizations, institutions, in both local and global arenas from the core of our own dynamic understanding of method and the different specialties and their interrelationship.

We also note that several participants at the meeting hail from Africa and Asia; and we second their observations, perhaps well summarized by Chae Young Kim, of the Asian Lonergan Association, who said:

I believe that Lonergan associations should be developed more officially and form an umbrella; for example, the Academic Association or World Congress of Lonergan studies. *It is awkward to get in touch with folks if you do not have a framework.* We could divide into committees so that we can understand more in our own groups – looking at different questions or concerns. (emphases added) (BC 2010 meeting minutes)

An association, organized on a concerted IFS basis would help promote Chae Young Kim's hope for Lonergan studies in Asia with inter-religious dialogue in mind or, similarly, that of representatives from Africa who called for engagement in native cultures or academic disciplines on an integrated basis. A similar point can be made regarding the various groups in Australia and New Zealand.

The question of association title brings us again to the hindrances associated with (IFS) outreach. Our thoughts are this: We wish to offer a non-threatening, open, and ongoing appeal to global, non-Christian, and mainstream academic groups, for instance, as that represented by the Gaia movement. If so, we had best not place upfront either “Lonergan’s view” or his religious affiliation, or lead with his contributions to religious and theological dialogue.

We speak not of rejection of either but rather of emphases--for our ability to meet the challenge of comprehensive “audience” outreach from a theoretical order we all know to be completely trans-cultural and also, in its present way, unique.

That both emphases (Lonergan’s name and theological/religious identity) lead and dominate the narratives and emphases in present groups is well-known and even still needed in some ways; and we might say that, up to this point, these emphases were emergent and, as such, the right way to go. However, if we are to enter *mainstream* or *global* or non-Christian anything, besides overtly religious and theological arenas, or “comparative-camp” discourse (via “Lonergan’s view”), we need to lead with and emphasize the contributions to the academy and culture that first square with what is trans-cultural about Lonergan’s work, or more general and secular issues and concerns. As example, the name and mood of our search should be something like what Stewart Brand talks of at the beginning of his final chapter, "PlanetCraft" in his recent book; *Whole Earth Discipline: An Ecopragmatist Manifesto*:

Whether it 's called managing the commons, natural-infrastructure maintenance, tending the wild, niche construction, ecosystem engineering, mega-gardening, or intentional Gaia, humanity is now stuck with a planet stewardship role. (Atlantic Books 2010)

Some such title, then, for instance, again, IFS, or "Structuring Global Collaboration," might fit the bill. However, a name should emerge in our ongoing discussions (and where we also name a date for ending the discussion and resolving on that name).

We hereby appeal to the BC membership, SGEME, SSI, and Skipperlist memberships to come together in our discussions on the possibilities of implementing such a concerted outreach.

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