Comment on Bob Henman's Implementation Research by Phil McShane

Bob’s presentation came as a pleasant surprize to me this first morning of the seminar, and it deserves a few words for all our benefits. I shall be brief. Later we can talk, Bob and I and you - about refinements. But I wish to make two main points: [1] Bob's piece is remarkably on the ball [2] Bob has been working on this functional notion for over a year, particularly in relation to communications, so he is ahead of the group. Each of us needs to share his patience.

Let me start with [2].

[2] I have received some other suggestions, outlines, etc,already and NOT SURPRIZINGLY they are not on the ball. They generally move in an old notion of research, which Lonergan does not correct in his short comments in Method. So, please please, you really have to take time out to muse over the parallels that I gave in the general introduction:

[a] the parallel from the conversation of Boyer and Lonergan regarding what Lonergan should study for his doctorate. Boyer is a poor functional researcher there: he just says "here is a text worth starting from".

[b] This resembles what the physics observer says to the theoretician: "here is a reaction worth grappling with", but the physics person generally hunts around after finding the anomaly to see whether there are similar anomalies he missed earlier,kindred reactions, and includes this in what he passes on to the theoretical community. Boyer left such hunting to Lonergan.

[1] back now to [1]: the remarkable effort, and I leave critical comments till later, perhaps to you, comments related to the question, "Is this a good on-passing?", where now I think of the parallel with relay racing .... the baton exchange is a tricky business [witness the American men in the last Olympics!].

But the positive side is that Bob goes hunting, finds other "zones", even enlarges on his hunt e.g. to find what he refers to in note [4].

So Bob's lead can help others along in the ENORMOUSLY DIFFICULT TASK OF FANTASY AND HUNTING. We - you and I and Bob - have a long way to go to come to a glimpse of the patterns of omnidisciplinary functional research that will boost the purging and self-purging "of the rationalizations and myths that became part of the human heritage before it came on the scene"(Insight, 265: a comment on cosmopolis worth reading now in our context).

Phil

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