

FuSe 16

Contexts of Functional Dialectic

Obviously, as in previous “contexts” essays - FuSe 10 and FuSe 13 - I can refer back to the contextualization that comes from seminars 1, 2 and 3. Furthermore there are my previous considerable efforts to contextualize an implementation of Lonergan’s program for dialecticians that consist in a pastiche of commentaries on that single page 250 of *Method in Theology*. I wish to keep this introductory essay to our attempt at this specialty brief, so I restrict myself to three sections in this essay. First there is, in section 1, a list of previous efforts of mine. My final decision was that I would leave it to readers to venture on the tasks suggested in any of them or all of them. The third section adds to that some further skimpy directions regarding the second half of that single page of *Method*.

The second section relates to a previous notion¹ of this essay as focusing on Richard Feynman’s achievement so as to wind it, paradigm-wise, into the challenge of dialectic. But now there seems little value in adding that complexity at this stage in our elementary struggle with the dynamics of functional collaboration. Still, the focus should not be lost, and so the second section stays in that world, with a suggestive title, “The Concrete Intelligibility of Space and Time,” borrowed from Lonergan.² I points to a complex of challenges quite remote from our stumbling times.

1. Making a Start on Functional Dialectic

The meaning of page 250 of *Method in Theology* is to emerge in this millennium, just as the meaning of Galileo’s empirical bent emerged only in the centuries since. What might I do to nudge people towards a serious search for that meaning? The listed

¹See FuSe 7, at note 6.

²It is the title of the final section of *Insight* chapter 5.

articles reach for Lonergan's meaning; the reach for the historical meaning is a matter of the next millennium.

Sofdaware 1: From Cantowers to Collaboration

Sofdaware 2: Reading Method in Theology p. 250

Sofdaware 3: Reading Care into Method 250

Sofdaware 4: Care: From Name to Nomos

Sofdaware 5: Care reaching for Completeness

Sofdaware 6: Rambles in Method 250

Sofdaware 7: Symbolizing the Growth of Care

Sofdaware 8: Beginning Functional Collaboration

Quodlibet 1: A Fresh Beginning

Quodlibet 2: Convenient Images of Creative Control of Meaning

Quodlibet 3: Being Breathless and Late in Talking about Virtue

Quodlibet 4: Shifting Insight 17.3 into a Functional Specialist Context

Quodlibet 5: A Simple reading of Method In Theology, Page 250.

Quodlibet 6: Comparison and Integral Canons of Inquiry

Quodlibet 7: Method in Theology page 250, for Beginners

Quodlibet 8: The Dialectic of My Town, Ma Vlast

Quodlibet 9: Some Foundational Pointings Regarding Evaluation

Quodlibet 10: A Simple Dialectic Positioning on Functional Specialization

Quodlibet 11: Method in Theology, Page 250: The Six Italicized Words

Quodlibet 12: Cantower Demission, Quodlibet Commission

Quodlibet 13: Reading the Book of Herself, Don't You Know

Quodlibet 14: Reply to 'Reading the Book of Herself'

Quodlibet 15: The Discouraging Cultural Ethos

Quodlibet 16: Seeing Water in a Slice of Brain

Quodlibet 17: The Origins and Goals of Functional Specialization

Quodlibet 18: As IV Leaguers

Quodlibet 19: The Solution to the Problem of Feelings in Lonergan Studies

Quodlibet 20: Lonergan's Metaphysics: A Functional Interpretation

Quodlibet 21: Recycling Ancient Meanings

2. The Concrete Intelligibility of Space and Time

In introducing this section above I remarked that in it "I point to a complex of challenges quite remote from our stumbling times." The context would have been still larger had I followed my earlier inspiration of building in the reach of the works of Richard Feynman,³ placed with the world of Lindsay and Margenau⁴ in which Lonergan lived.⁵ Here I cut myself back to certain parts of the book *Insight*, giving a frightening enough image of the foundational challenge to be met in these next

³There is no point in adding a bibliography. It is sufficient, perhaps, to point to my own references at notes 23 and 66 of the biography-chapter mentioned in note 5 below. To these I would add the recently published *Feynman's Thesis. A New Approach to Quantum Theory*, by Laurie M. Brown, World Scientific, 2008. I would note too - it is a matter of dialectic biography - that I have spent more time and energy in my life on Feynman's volume on Quantum Theory [vol. 3 of those mentioned in note 23, p. 175 of the Lonergan biography] than on any other book except *Insight*. Neither Feynman nor Lonergan reached a serious breakthrough on the problem involved here, of secondary determinations. Some rambles round it are in my *Joistings* 24, "Getting into (the Philosophy of) Quantum Mechanics and *Joistings* 25, "Rescuing Quantum Mechanics".

⁴"Lindsay and Margenau" was Lonergan's regular way of referring to the work of Robert Lindsay and Henry Margenau, *Foundations of Physics*, a book that was dear to him and of which he had his own copy. (On the topic see pp. 172-3 of the biography mentioned in the next note, and the Rice Interviews referred to there). I find it strange that neither of the other two biographers refer to or index this book: and **that**, of course, is a bit of my dialectic positioning. Lonergan's own dialectic positioning can be suspected by a remark he made in the late 1970s to a question in a Boston Workshop: "How much physics should a theologian know?" "Well, he should be able to read Lindsay and Margenau!"

⁵See chapter 10 of Pierrot Lambert and Philip McShane, *Bernard Lonergan : His Life and Leading Ideas*, Axial Publishing, 2010. The notes there add further complexities to the context. I think especially of the reach of Eddington for an integrative perspective on The Principle of Least Action and Thermodynamics that is referenced there in note 17 (pp. 173-4).

generations.⁶ I focus first on what I may call the problem of primary qualities talked of there, and then point to the larger context of concrete intelligibility posed by the second canon of hermeneutics.

First, then, there is the problem of getting to luminous grips with **extension** as, so to speak, in the same ball park as the colour **red**. The handiest way of tuning into that problem is to move through the references given in the index of *Insight* on the topic.⁷ The last reference given there, to page 438, should have carried on through to page 440, where one is given the goading opportunity to meet Husserl. The entire paragraph, beginning line 5, is worth adding here as a positioning in dialectic, “each investigator proceeds to distinguish,”⁸ all leading wonderfully to the brutal positioning of the first five words of the next paragraph. “But description is not enough.” But the final sentence of the paragraph suffices for my present hinting: “In brief, phenomenology is a highly purified empiricism, and it did not take long for it to topple over into an existentialism that describes, not the abstract possibilities of description, but men as they are.”

And why not topple over into existentialism as a help to our hints? So, we may pause with a paragraph written by Renaud Barbaras about Merleau-Ponty.

“Merleau-Ponty’s reflections on space, which several paragraph’s of ‘Eye and Mind’ provide, is implied by his interrogation of vision. Vision alone gives me access to what is not me, to what is ‘fully and simply’. To see is not to coincide blindly with the object, but to unfold an interiority. Insofar as they are seen, the things do not rest in

⁶An earlier expression of my challenge “Lonergan’s Meaning of **Complete** in the Fifth Canon of Scientific Method”, *Journal of Macrodynamical Analysis*, vol. 4 (2004) <http://www.mun.ca/jmda/vol4> See also Terrance Quinn’s Contextualization of the problem in Fuse 11.

⁷“Qualities: and metaphysics, 420; primary and secondary, 107-9, 123, 153, 277, 319, 363, 438.” The last references should have carried on through to page 440, where one is given the opportunity to meet Husserl. See also the next note.

⁸*Method in Theology*, 250, line 20.

themselves at an absolute distance, but they nonetheless remain far away, thick. They recede into a distance which, measured from me, is nevertheless proximity. Spatiality is then synonymous with the 'being-there' [*l'être-la*] of the thing, with its appearance as thing. The attempt to conceive spatiality is an attempt to draw a little nearer to the heart of the experience, a little nearer to the carnal chiasm."⁹

"We have been, have we not, 'interrogating vision' in these past two *Field Nocturnes*? The interrogation, my **whathere** common sense tells me if interrogated, 'gives me access to what is not me', indeed to a Noah's ark of sight-seers.

But now we are off in another world from Merleau-Ponty and Barbaras. It is a world that they inhabit, if they are to interrogate. The focus of their interrogation, however, is not that world, but the psychic-skin world of the given, 'wild being' perhaps, of which one might say that 'spatiality is then synonymous with the being-there.' But in human history there is another given, if only metaphorically given within my identification of 'the given.'¹⁰ And that **whathere** is the root of 'the attempt to conceive spatiality.' It is indeed - but in a sense that escapes entrapment in a psychic-skin world - 'an attempt to draw nearer to the heart of experience, a little nearer to the carnal chiasm.'

What is that escape, that escapade of all our **whatheres** together? It is our home,¹¹ but its luminosity as home is a distant objective, at a distance from desire,

⁹Renaud Barbaras, *The Being of the Phenomenon. Merleau-Ponty's Ontology*, translated by Ted Toadvine and Leonard Lawlor, Indiana University Press, 2004, 204. It is the first paragraph of the subsection of the chapter "Originary Spatio-Temporality", with title "Philosophy and Space". His later effort is also relevant: *Desire and Distance: Introduction to the Phenomenology of Perception*, translated by Paul B. Milan, Stanford University Press, 2006.

¹⁰See section 4 of *Field Nocturne 21*, "Observing Brains".

¹¹See, for example, *Cantower 21*, "Epilogue". See *Method in Theology 14*, 350-1.

crippled by not being acknowledged as such.¹² The tree of life that is to be an effective comprehension of our cosmic trail is not yet the sapling of the fourth stage of meaning, the new ‘Unity of a Concrete Being’ that is a minder, but luminously so for those of the Tower of Able.”¹³

I have been struggling to advance in that luminosity since I climbed through those *Field Nocturnes* four years ago and now see more clearly the powerful inclusiveness of that moving-viewpoint of chapter five of *Insight*, an inclusion of all of finitude’s linguistic weave in that final section. But this is not the place for sketching the concrete intelligibility of space and time that is pointed to in the brief heuristic demand, “but description is not enough,”¹⁴ as it bubbles forth in the shockingly short paragraph of the second canon of hermeneutics that has preoccupied me for decades, with its gloriously hopeful ending “fuse into a single explanation.”¹⁵ So it seems best to simply refer to my various previous pointers in this, my dialectic ramble through lines 20 to 28 of *Method* page 250.

¹²“What is lacking is knowledge of all that is lacking and only gradually is that knowledge acquired.” (*Insight*, 536[559])

¹³I am quoting from *Field Nocturne* 36, but adding a fuller reference than there in the note 10 above. These 41 *Field Nocturnes*, essentially a commentary on the single paragraph of *Insight*, beginning “Study of the organism....” (p. 489) adds another context to our challenge: the concrete intelligibility of the space-time organism. In *Field Nocturne* 32, “Desire Undistanced: Light”, Renaud Barbaras was first introduced and his two-book effort contrasted with the two-book effort of the physicist Lochlainn O’Raifeartaigh. A useful background is P.McShane, “Elevating *Insight*. Space-Time as paradigm Problem”, *Method : Journal of Lonergan Studies* **19** (2004), 203-229.

¹⁴*Insight*, 440.

¹⁵*Insight* 610, line 9. I have written at length about this in various places, some of which I should list now. But I would like to note, first, that the line quoted pushes me to two foundational suggestions, one nominal and the other eschatological. The nominal push is towards replacing the name *Lonerganism* by *Fusionism*: Lonerganism, at all events, is not a respected name at present. The full push is towards opening a fresh empirical effort to conceive “destiny” (*Method in Theology*, 292, line 16) in term of our endless circumincessional fusion into a single Explanation.

Nor can I resist pointing to the brilliant extra push Lonergan' gives, in the "final objectification."¹⁶ We are not finished our dialectic self-purification, our "pain not to conceal tracks"¹⁷ until we take to heart, a fresh *Completion*,¹⁸ such claims as mine: that we are nowhere near, in our time, facing up to the challenge of being at the level of our times, seeking in contemplative earnestness to lead the next generations of global careers "to be at home in modern science."¹⁹

3. Some Pointers on Positioning

My interest here is in the seminar group musing over my hinted view of intellectual displacements as a help towards our efforts here to move from our small *assembly* etc, through lines 15-33 of *Method* 250. Lonergan, in this section, writes of intellectual, moral and religious conversions. While moral and religious orientations are operative in our perspectives, they are not the focus of my present attention and concern.

First, then, there are our stands on the *assembly* attempted, an *assembly* that grew out our efforts to do functional research, that blossomed - with the help of our seven samurai of Fuses 11 and 12 - in our push towards interpretations of pieces of Lonergan's writing, a reach for his personal meaning, and that shaped up through reflection on the story of that meaning in these past fifty or so years. Secondly, I want us to shift our attention to the second paragraph on the following

¹⁶*Method in Theology*, 250, line 28.

¹⁷*Ibid*, 193.

¹⁸*Method in Theology*, 250, line 3: a process repeated in the final objectification.

¹⁹The point is solidly made on pages 350-51 of *Method in Theology*. Nor is it a matter of just struggling with the simplest science with help from Lindsay and Margenau. It is a matter of stepping away from the "pseudometaphysical mythmaking" (*Insight*, 528) which is the assumed way of present Lonergan studies at all levels of inquiry, rather obviously to serious non-school members, "arriving on the scene a little breathless and a little late" (*Insight*, 755).

page, 251, and for the moment focus on the third of its three sentences. “When he develops positions and reverses counterpositions, he will be presenting an idealized version of the past.”

This is going to be a giant task of collaboration, especially in these coming centuries: where were Mo Ti or Bonaventure pointing that brighten the past and the future? And to do our own little task regarding the past 50 years of what I might call the cone of Lonergan studies is still quite a challenge. “Investigators will tend to agree” if their conversions or displacements mesh. To help with this identification of this tending and indeed with the meshing of a tending opposed to Lonergan’s bent, I wish to home in on what I call displacements in mindings: what others might be happier calling intellectual conversions or something else.

I start with the familiar “intellectual conversion”, familiar in that it is talked about in those words. It is a deep, and deeply elusive displacement of minding.²⁰ It is talked about familiarly thus, although it is existentially unfamiliar. Mark Morelli rightly associates it with leaving, not just Kant, but Hegel behind.²¹ It becomes a relatively adequate minding stance when it is not just a position but a poosition, a rare enough achievement of adult growth to be associated with Maslow’s familiar “less than one percent of adults grow”.²² Don’t rush, then, to claim it as your intimate own. And to help avoid that rush notice the very simple pointer towards it that people nevertheless

²⁰I first discussed the elusiveness of the shift in “The Contemporary Thomism of Bernard Lonergan”, *Philosophical Studies* (Ireland), 1962. [Available in the Website Archives] The point, so often missed, is that *being* is just a name in *Insight* chapter 12; in chapter 13 the problem the standard epistemological emerges; only on page 413 is the position proposed thematically, and it is done so there in minimal descriptiveness. The next note adds a further problematic.

²¹See Mark Morelli’s compact statement in “Lonergan’s Debt to Hegel and the appropriation of Critical Realism,” *Meaning and History in Systematic Theology. Essays in Honor of Robert M. Doran S.J.*, edited by John D. Dadosky, Marquette University Press, 2007, 405-422.

²²On the meaning of *poosition* and on the general elusiveness of full positioning see Cantower 9, “Position, Poosition, Protopossession.”

find enormously difficult: Lonergan's invitation to a decision on page 413 of *Insight*. It is a relatively descriptive invitation, needing a wealth of axiomatic refinements, a skimpy sketch of which is my intention here.

The invitation, of course, began at the beginning of *Insight*, and only a miracle of first reading, indeed of very slow reading, would make the shift of the invitation anything more than a humble and tricky decision.

The humility and trickiness relates to the topic of bridges, discussed at length elsewhere.²³ Here, I wish to narrow our focus to the minding that is associated with *theoria* in its best sense,²⁴ and indeed only *theoria* in the simplest of sciences. And that brings us to the massive cultural assumption of most of the Lonergan school: that, despite what Lonergan says about *Insight* chapter 5 as bridge, we really don't need to take him seriously. WHAT, I would ask you, is your position on that?

Involved here is a conversion, displacement, of minding that is key to the serious progress of collaboration. The doctrine is that theoretic conversion is an essential to membership of The Tower of Able. Such conversion can be mimicked "by classicism. I mean the fruit of an unsuccessful education in which, first of all, there is no real grasp of theory of any kind."²⁵ This is the sort of education that is common to these early generations of Lonergan studies. There is abundant comparative studies and Linnean-type classifications of viewpoints, but she or "he is never bitten by theory has no apprehension of e.g. Newton's weeks in his room."²⁶ " They are lost in some no man's

²³See my "Features of Generalized Empirical Method: a Bridge too Far?", *Creativity and Method*, edited by M. Lamb, Marquette University Press, 1982.

²⁴I recall Lonergan's comments on it in relation both to Aristotle and to the Greek fathers, in "Mission and Spirit," *A Third Collection*, Paulist Press, 1985, 27.

²⁵Lonergan, *CWL* 6, 155

²⁶*Ibid.*

land between the world of theory and the world of common sense.”²⁷

That lostness is enhanced rather than removed by a vague scholarliness regarding the book *Insight*.

This leads me to comment on a further type of displacement - or conversion - of minding that which opens one effectively and existentially to what I originally called “the village strangeness of the other”²⁸ and to what Lonergan would call scholarly openness.²⁹ This displacement is obviously vital to a multicultural reach, but here I am noting its importance to an openness to the culture of serious understanding: one has to be open to both Einstein and Elgar.

The final displacement of minding I wish to mention is the one that carries a person towards an existential poise of adult growth. It is a difficult achievement: the clearheaded psychic intussusception that, normatively, you become a stranger to yourself of last month in an accelerating fashion. We are back to the point made about, regarding “less than 1% of adults growing” in the present culture of axial decay.

In conclusion I return to that paragraph on page 251 of *Method*. Above, in the context of that paragraph, I remarked that “ ‘Investigators will tend to agree’ if their conversions or displacements mesh.” My stand regarding the assembled story of Lonerganism in these fifty years is that investigators very much tend to agree that serious scientific understanding can be replaced by rich comparative descriptions: so “there is the substitution of a pseudometaphysical mythmaking for scientific inquiry.”³⁰

²⁷*Ibid.*, 121.

²⁸It is a phrase that I used regularly in my Preface to, and article in, *Searching for Cultural Foundations*, University Press of America, 1984.

²⁹Lonergan generally uses the word scholarship to speak of the reach into another common sense. (See *Method in Theology*, the index under *Scholarship*) I am nudging its meaning to a larger complexity.

³⁰*Insight*, 528.

Rather than being “a little breathless and a little late”³¹ the investigators are breathing relaxedly the same old tradition of over-reaching commonsense bias.

³¹*Insight*, 755.