

## INTERPRETING LONERGAN: TRIESTE I

I was quite surprised and delighted to get word in June, from a colleague in central Europe, that there was to be a conference in Trieste in late July on Functional Specialization. I knew some of those invited and so decided to gather my thoughts on the challenge in some rough rambling fashion. That gathering, loose as it is, is the content of this essay. After I had shared my musings I found that the gathering was to be, in fact, a quite small affair sponsored by Seton Hall in New Jersey. Still, there is hope that this could be a communal start of interest in this key discovery of Lonergan. To that end also Reverend Julio Teixeira, at my request, sent copies of this year's second *Insight* commemorative volume of *Divyadaan: Journal of Philosophy & Education* to the gathering: its topic is Functional Collaboration. Perhaps, we are to find from these coincidences that the issue of cosmopolis, central to *Insight*, is to be taken seriously after sixty years?

Here then are my notes.

### Towards the Trieste Meeting on Functional Specialization, July 2017

First, I should note that I had the great advantage of struggling with the problem from 1957 on (beginning with *Verbum* in 1956, after an M.Sc. in mathematics and physics). So I got the shock effectively of the unimaginable global solution from Lonergan in the summer of 1966 and it hit me creatively regarding musicology in the summer of 1969 (one of the Florida papers: the other was on botany).<sup>1</sup> Later there were the by-then obvious moves titled “A Rolling Stone Gathers *Nomos*” in economics<sup>2</sup> and linguistics<sup>3</sup> literature and other areas like ecology and climbing were dealt with elsewhere.

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<sup>1</sup> The two papers are chapters 1 and 2 of *The Shaping of the Foundations* (Washington: University Press of America, 1976), available online at: [Published Books](#).

<sup>2</sup> *Economics for Everyone: Das Jus Kapital*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Vancouver: Axial Publishing, 2017) chapter 5. The 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, which is available on Amazon, contains a new Preface.

<sup>3</sup> *A Brief History of Tongue: From Big Bang to Coloured Wholes* (Axial Press, 1998), chapter 3.

O.K.: now some helpful notes regarding *Method in Theology*, where I was stirred by Lonergan’s conversing about his problem in 1966/67: “What can I do? I can’t put all of *Insight* into chapter one.”

[1] So, having recalled the messy problem Lonergan had when trying to begin in 1966, I note that he settled for description. A key here is to see the challenge to re-think and re-write Part One clearly identified in the middle paragraph of *Method* 287: “one can go on to ...” think out and rewrite those early chapters.

[2] The first three paragraphs of chapter one are right on but hard to intussuscept: “academic disciplines” approach has held us all hostage except those working in good physics and good chemistry. Also note (re: that first page) that, while he mentions physics implicitly at the end of page 364, I don’t think he has in mind the massive shift of Physics that is to emerge in later times, integrating it, e.g., with engineering (see Cecilia Maloney’s paper at West Coast Methods Institute on functional specialization in engineering last April 2017).<sup>4</sup> The “third way” is Functional Specialization. But Lonergan slipped into the “compact descriptive mode” in the fourth paragraph and stayed in it all the way in the book.

[3] The crisis page in the book is page 250, (a) especially the lines 18–33 which I have regularly called *Lonergan’s 1833 Overture*. They are very cunningly constructed to ensure awkward repetitive encounters with self and others. It takes a lot of focused reading. Note that Doran in his recent Trinity book missed the point to such an extent that he invented a ninth functional specialty;<sup>5</sup> (b) the upper 17 lines are massively difficult to read. I tried it over a long period under the title of [Quodlibet](#); but not having the basic insight that I mention now: the relation of *Comparison* with the problem posed by Lonergan at the end of *Insight*, regarding a treatise on the mystical body (*Insight*, 763–64). *Comparison* is an operation that is common to all sciences: the comparison is of recent work to the standard model, pointing us towards either inclusion or rejection or modification. Most obvious present case: rejecting string theory as against keeping the standard model (because string theory offends the canon of selection).

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<sup>4</sup> A context is Terrance Quinn *The (Pre-)Dawning of Functional Specialization in Physics* (Hackensack NJ: World Scientific Publishing Company, 2017).

<sup>5</sup> *The Trinity in History: A Theology of the Divine Missions*, Vol. 1, U of T Press, 2012. See my [Question 27](#), “Approaching Doran’s Trinitarian Theology.”

Note that the standard model in its future fullness is to include the organized sequence of standard models. Such a sequence in physics e.g. watches for light for present work from Hamilton, Faraday, Maxwell, Feynman, etc. So it is no great jump to envisage the full treatise on the mystical body as an ordered sequencing of theses on the nature of history (to open us to other religions), but—for our narrower Christian purposes—a sequence of treatises on the nature of the Church through the ages. So I think of revisitings such as suggested “in the chapter in *Method* on Doctrines. Think of the revisiting posed there as from a fresh-front view, the quite new telling of the old story. The revisiting is to lead, so so slowly, to a new front-thesis on the mystical body, that front-thesis eventually to be integrated in the sublated genetic systematics of all such theses through the ages” (my *The Road to Religious Reality*, 38: the end of the chapter on systematics).

[4] This leads back to our failure to get an effective grip on *Insight* 17.3. My present series, titled [Interpretation](#), is tackling that, now up to no. 20 on the website: there is a forum [Interpretation](#) which should make the effort communal. The failure is summed up in the failure to get an effective grip on the paragraph I call 60910 (it spans pages 609 and 610 of *Insight*). The paragraph asks that we push for a genetic control of understanding and expressions that parallel the control asked for in good history of mathematics.<sup>6</sup> So, for example, instead of comparing Lonergan and, say, Kierkegaard, one compares what one has found [FS 1–3] in Kierkegaard to the standard genetic model. Comparison as it occurs at present in Lonergan studies—e.g. “Hegel and Darwin,” or “Rahner and de la Taille”—is in the style of “academic disciplines” (*Method*, end of page 3). Lonergan follows those two words with: “clearly enough, these approaches to the problem of method do little to advance the less successful subjects.” (*Method*, top of page 4)

[5] Lonergan was not at his best in tackling the last specialty. He never lectured on it, as far as I know: I did the 1971 lecture in Dublin. The first two sections make the major point. The “character” of section one fits *Magna Moralia*’s point, in its first paragraph, regarding controlling characters of history. The second section is regarding implementation, and his

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<sup>6</sup> The key text is in *Early Works on Theological Method 2*, CWL 23, 174–77. Section 1, “Understanding and Method” (3–229) is a translation of “*De Intellectu et Methodo*.”

ramble through eight mentions of “situation” (p. 358) is straining to open doors. I picked up on that recently and imaged a hierarchy of eight “situation rooms”<sup>7</sup> over every situation: a powerful image, I think, of the fruitful effectiveness (see *Method* 355, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph) in the face of the demand “what is good, always is concrete.” (*Method*, 27: beginning chapter 2)

[6] Finally, back to the first specialty, so briefly treated in *Method*: Lonergan regretted the brevity later. My own effort to talk of this specialty runs through the ten first essays of the series *FuSe*: they are reproduced as volume 9 (2016) of the website journal (Memorial University, Newfoundland) [Journal of Macrodynamic Analysis](#). Functional Research recycles from ongoing global history under the general perspective: “this is worth recycling.” This comes from a situation, e.g., a village in France or India, but its recycling can arrive in any village or zone in the globe. The dynamics of that is complex, but I would note that all disciplines are included: they are to be eventually within the full standard model of global care, but they work in their own corner of meaning and the convergence occurs as results are cycled up (see my [Cantower 8](#), “Slopes: An Encounter,” page 13). The divergence from the fifth specialty to the eighth and on to various common senses has a more complex structure.

Best to halt here: it would seem to be a decent starting context for a fresh effort to read and implement *Method*. I would note that the list on page 287 of *Method* has a place for functional specialization under (6). For years I took it that there was need to add a (10) to the list: it is an added twist to the practical project that Lonergan envisaged metaphysics to be. Notice that the ethos of the times kept Fred Crowe from indexing *implementation* in the first edition of *Insight*: the second edition was not a great improvement (see Patrick Brown, “Assembling Meanings of ‘Implementation,’” *Divyadaan* 28/2, [2017] 203–232).

Finally I note that there is a deep optimism here, written of by Lonergan in the last page of his 1936 “Essay on Fundamental Sociology” where he writes about the power of charity and the Isaiah chapter 2 passage that, in the end sentence, he considers not fancy but a future

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<sup>7</sup> A pop version of the structure is in chapter 12 of [Profit: The Stupid View of President Donald Trump](#), (Vancouver: Axial Publishing, 2016) “The Situation Room. The Stupid View of Wolf Blitzer.” It is in a better context in pp. 191ff of *The Allure of the Compelling Genius of History*, where chapter 16 meshes—it is the title—“Communications and Metaphysics as Science.”

fact: think of the positive Anthropocene. This connects with my Amendment A:<sup>8</sup> a positive answer to my question, “Do you view humanity as possibly maturing—in some serious way—or just messing along between good and evil, whatever you think they are?”

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<sup>8</sup> *Profit: The Stupid View of President Donald Trump*, 85. The Amendment was first proposed in *Futurology Express* (Vancouver: Axial Publishing, 2013), the secular version of the project of functional global collaboration. The distinction between negative and positive Anthropocene Era is mine. We are in the end agony of the negative: the positive corresponds to the second time of the temporal subject. See *The Triune God: Systematics*, CWL 12, Question 21, 399–413.