

INTERPRETING LONERGAN: TRIESTE II

My original title for this essay was general yet strategically restricted: “Loneranism: What on Earth can be done?” It thus posed again Lonergan’s question of over 80 years ago—the question with which I ended the previous essay—but now addressed to his disciples. The strategic restriction now becomes, it seems to me, more strategic, in that I address the small group mentioned in the previous essay of this title: might I not spark a reaction from those involved?¹

For Lonergan, the issue of theology—and its abstractive friend philosophy—has always been “a resolute and effective intervention in this historical process.”² That intervention was conceived by him, as it was for Thomas, as needing to be a science, therefore explanatory. Late in life he solved his problem, and Thomas’s, of that science being effective, by enlarging the prevailing notion of science to include its effectiveness.

I am not going into all that stuff here. My focus is on his aim being the establishment of an effective science of humanity. To contribute, here and now, to that effectiveness, I further—am I not strategically repeating myself?—restrict my focus to the recent meeting in Trieste, the program for which I append to this short challenge in Appendix A.

I do not wish to let that focus stray into the procedures of the science conceived of by Lonergan in his sixtieth year: here there is no heavy venture into *Assembly* carried forwards to

¹ The previous essay referred to is [Interpretation 21](#), “Interpreting Lonergan: Trieste I.” There you find suggestions of mine made to members of the gathering. Keeping them in my sights, so to speak, gives me a hope of response, critical or not, something I am sadly quite unfamiliar with over the past fifty years. For instance, the point made in Appendix B below was originally addressed to a full gathering of Lonergan leaders in Boston College in 2016: there was no reaction. Perhaps I need to get very direct with single members of the leadership, following Lonergan’s example in his dealings with Fr. Angelo Perego in “Christ as Subject: A Reply” (*Collection, CWL 3*, 152–84)? Such directness is, of course, a strategy he carefully built into his scientific dialectic, in *Lonergan’s 1833 Overture*. But who pays attention to that strategy of his? See notes 3 and 10.

² *Phenomenology and Logic*, *CWL 18*, 306.

the precision of encounter sketched in what I call *Lonergan's 1833 Overture*.³ What I do wish to do—yes, a measured bluntness that brings to mind Fred Crowe⁴—is simply accuse the meeting in Trieste of being non-scientific.

Will those involved then explicitly defending themselves? I doubt it. But, at all events, let it be clear what I am accusing them of: I accuse the group not of being inauthentic but of being unscientific. Here it seems appropriate to quote a relevant passage from Lonergan about existing

in the fullest sense of the name. Such existing may be authentic or unauthentic, and this may occur in two different ways. There is the minor authenticity or unauthenticity of the subject with respect to the tradition that nourishes him. There is the major authenticity that condemns the tradition itself. In the first case there is passed a human judgment on subjects. In the second case history and, ultimately, divine providence pass judgment on traditions.⁵

My risk at this time, in 2017, halfway through my 86th year, is that my own authenticity is at stake if I now leave judgment on this precise matter to history. The West has already had two serious instances of squashed authenticity of genius.⁶ Lonerganism, and the Trieste meeting, may well be authentic in the tradition that nourished them. But that is a sick tradition,

³ Patrick Brown has reflected in various places on the gross neglect of this page and on its challenge. See conveniently, for example, his essay [Lonergan Gatherings 10](#): “Some Notes on the Development of *Method* 250,” a paper presented on April 30th, 2011 at the 26th Annual Fallon Memorial Lonergan Symposium, West Coast Methods Institute, Loyola Marymount University.

⁴ “Is there not room for a measure of bluntness at this stage?” (F. E. Crowe, “The Exigent Mind,” *Studies in Honor of Bernard Lonergan*, Herder and Herder, 1964, 27). At various times over the decades Crowe and I mused over failure to take Lonergan seriously. His gallant attempt at FS₃, *Theology of the Christian Word: A Study in History* (Paulist Press, 1978), ends with the claim, “When you have a mountain to move, and only a spade and wheelbarrow to work with, you can either sit on your hands or you can put spade to earth and move the first sod”(149). I am here trying to move some sods. I would say that Appendix B represents a neat start: at some stage in such a reach towards scientific hermeneutics the complexity should lead us to take seriously, effectively, *Method in Theology*, 153, note 1.

⁵ *Method in Theology*, 79–80.

⁶ In the Prologue to my *The Everlasting Joy of Being Human* (Axial Publishing, 2013: it is the beginning of an Eschatology), I paused over the squashing of Thomas. On the Greek squashing there is the conclusion of Voegelin’s first volume of *Order and History*.

part of “the monster that has stood forth in our time,”⁷ glossily living as a sub-tradition called “academic disciplines,”⁸ condemned by Lonergan in the third paragraph of *Method in Theology*.

A science, on the other hand, picks up on the best of previous attempts and struggles towards “cumulative and progressive results.”⁹ There has been almost half a century of such attempts at cumulative progress in the science conceived by Lonergan, beginning with my own venture into the need for functional specialization in musicology, a venture in the humanities—the topic of the first day at the conference.

I halt, curiously, at that first instance of musicology’s need, for enlargement either about work in the humanities since then, or in the topics of the second and third day of the Trieste meeting, would only divert attention from the stark fact. The three days were amateur days of doubtful effectiveness in the humanities, sciences, philosophy or theology. This sentencing sentence, I add strategically, is my shot at “a resolute and effective intervention in this historical process.”¹⁰

I wonder now, is there is a probability¹¹ of a change of heart in this next decade, in this next century?¹² The key negative factor is that the professors return home to continue to mislead the next generations. How is the cycle of decline to be broken? “What on earth is to be done?”

[1] Some of the participants could join me—perhaps on the forum [Interpretation](#)—where I am at the moment: in that key part of the science invented by Lonergan that I name *Lonergan’s 1833 Overture*.

⁷ *Method in Theology*, 40.

⁸ *Ibid.*, end of page 3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 4; 5 in italics.

¹⁰ *Phenomenology and Logic*, CWL 18, 306. I would suggest that the core of that intervention is the global implementation of what I have called here *Lonergan’s 1833 Overture*.

¹¹ The context of my thinking, my mibox, is Lonergan’s musing on the cyclic lift of probabilities (*Insight*, 144, line 3ff). But at present there is no such cyclic lift.

¹² I recall reflecting, 20 years ago, in “Systematics: A Language of the Heart” ([The Redress of Poise](#), 71–89), on the possibility of a re-discovery of Lonergan’s concretely redemptive systematics centuries or perhaps millennia from now. “I invite you to imagine, with concrete global reference, the following note on Systematics as being from a dictionary of theology of the year 3000 A.D. (translated from the Hindi)” (71: the note is on 72). But surely we do not need to wait that long: we could have 2020 vision in 2020, with a little open-heart strategy.

[2] Some of those teaching might admit to their students, with or without [1], the error of their ways, and adjust their teaching so as to invite students to the climb into science in its functional cycling.

[3] There is the lesser challenge, given in Appendix B below.¹³ If functional specialization is unacceptable as a scientific structure, then might leaders and teachers not face the demands for science in interpretation that Lonergan so clearly makes in the third section of *Insight* chapter 17?

There are many more detailed suggestions I could make, but my strategy would be weakened by such complexification. What I really need, to get the ball rolling, is some outspokening by one or many senior colleagues pointing out the errors in my convictions and proposals. That pointing would be best done a la *Lonergan's 1833 Overture*, but any type of public challenge—like Angelo Perego's—would be welcome. The forum [Interpretation](#) is open.

¹³ See the first note above.

APPENDIX A: “THE ROLE OF FUNCTIONAL SPECIALTIES”



PRAXIS PROGRAM OF THE ADVANCED SEMINAR ON MISSION
SUMMER PROGRAM 2017

The Role of Functional Specialties A Workshop on Applying Lonergan

TRIESTE, Italy
July 25th – 27th, 2017

*SPONSORED by the Center for Vocation and Servant Leadership and
the Center for Catholic Studies, Seton Hall University*

*CO-SPONSORED by the Jacques Maritain Institute
Boston College
University of Trieste*

An international workshop for academics and scholars, focusing on applying Lonergan's ideas to various disciplines, for the purpose of integrating mission, educating the whole person, and forming an interdisciplinary community for ongoing collaboration. The workshop is meant to explore an understanding of how the functional specialties work and can promote progress in scholarship and research in the university.

Program and Schedule

Tuesday - July 25th – Workshop, University of Trieste

9.00 – 12.30 Functional Specialties and Humanities

Welcome and Praxis Program Overview

Linda Garofalo, Center for Vocation and Servant Leadership (Seton Hall University)

Danute Nourse, Center for Catholic Studies (Seton Hall University)

Chair

Simone Arnaldi, Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, Sociology, Pedagogy and Applied Psychology (University of Padova - Italy): *Tinkering with functional specialties: exploring the implications for responsibility in science and innovation*

Speakers

9.30 - Patrick Byrne, Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Lonergan Institute, Philosophy Department (Boston College - USA): *Encounters with the Good*

10.30 - Francesca Zaccaron, Member of the Board of Directors at Jacques Maritain Institute (Trieste – Italy), and former Lonergan Fellow at Boston College Lonergan Institute:
Development “from above downwards” and Self-appropriation

11.30 - Presentations and Discussion: The Praxis Program participants present their application of Lonergan’s thought in their teaching activities

Melinda Papaccio, English Department/First year writing

12.30 - Lunch

13.30 – 16.30 Presentations and Discussion - continued

The Praxis Program participants present their application of Lonergan’s thought in their teaching activities

Anthony Haynor, Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work, Associate Professor

Beth Bloom, Seton Hall University Libraries, Instruction Librarian

Lisa Rose-Wiles, Seton Hall University Libraries, Science Librarian/Associate Professor

Dinner on your own

Wednesday - July 26th – Workshop, University of Trieste

9.00 – 12.30 Functional Specialties and Sciences

Introduction – Francesca Zaccaron (Jacques Maritain Institute)

Chair

Simone Arnaldi (University of Padova)

Speakers

Gianguido Salvi, Assistant Professor, Department of Mathematics and Geosciences, (University of Trieste): TBD

9.30 - Patrick Byrne (Boston College): *Doing the Good*

10.30 - Francesca Zaccaron (Jacques Maritain Institute): *“Healing and Creating:” Caregivers’ Dynamic Unity*

11.30 – Presentations and Discussion: The Praxis Program participants present their application of Lonergan’s thought in their teaching activities

Maureen Byrnes, College of Nursing, Clinical Assistant Professor

12.30 - Lunch

13.30 – 16.30 Presentations and Discussion - continued

The Praxis Program participants present their application of Lonergan’s thought in their teaching activities

Josephine DeVito, College of Nursing, Associate Professor

Mary Ellen Roberts, College of Nursing, Assistant Professor

Genevieve Zipp, Dept of Interprofessional Health Sciences and Health Administration,
Professor

Dinner on your own

Thursday - July 27th – Workshop, University of Trieste

9.00 – 12.30 Functional Specialties and Philosophy and Theology

Chair

Francesca Zaccaron (Jacques Maritain Institute)

Speakers

9.15 - Frederick Lawrence, Professor of Theology, Theology Department (Boston College):
Conversation and Conversion: From Dialectic to Foundations

10.15 - Hilary Mooney, Professor of Theology, Theology Department (University of Education
Weingarten - Germany): *The Functional Specialties and the Cultivation of the Theological
Tradition*

11.15 - Presentations and Discussion: The Praxis Program participants present their application
of Lonergan's thought in their teaching activities

Doreen Stiskal-Galisewski, Department of Physical Therapy, Chair

12.30 - Lunch

13.30 – 16.30 Presentations and Discussion - continued

The Praxis Program participants present their application of Lonergan's thought in their teaching
activities

Irene De Masi, Department of Physical Therapy, Director of Clinical Education

Marian Glenn, Department of Biological Sciences, Professor

Workshop Closing

Danute Nourse, Center for Catholic Studies (Seton Hall University)

Linda Garofalo, Center for Vocation and Servant Leadership (Seton Hall University)

Dinner on your own

APPENDIX B: REPORT SUBMITTED BY PHILIP MCSHANE FOR THE JUNE 25TH, 2016 BOSTON MEETING

I send this report as a private person, although I am included in the SGEME report: perhaps being senior Lonergan scholar and editor of some of his trickiest works are grounds for an allowance for this exception?

The report concerns a dismal failure needing a serious discussion. We have all failed to take the challenge of Lonergan's canons of hermeneutics seriously: instead we putter along in the mode of "academic disciplines" (*Method*, end of the first page of chapter one), condemned by Lonergan on the next page of *Method*. The leadership leads in the stale outdated way. Doran swoops thus on *CWL* 11 and 12; Lawrence sweeps thus through German thinkers; McShane swaps thus one discipline for another repeatedly without tackling the genetic hermeneutics of any; etc. etc. Is it not time that we paused to be effectively embarrassed by a central doctrine? ("Doctrines that are embarrassing will not be mentioned in polite company." *Method*, 299) The embarrassment is in finding ourselves among those mentioned by Lonergan on *Insight* 604, in the flow of presenting his view of the needed serious science of interpretation. Being diligent and specialized is not enough.

One may expect the diligent authors of highly specialized monographs to be somewhat bewildered and dismayed when they find that instead of singly following the bent of their genius, their aptitudes, and their acquired skills, they are to collaborate in the light of abstruse principles and to have their individual results checked by general requirements that envisage simultaneously the totality of results.

The issue, the central doctrine we have dodged, is the emergence, across the board, of genetic systematics, an emergence packed into the genius paragraph (*Insight*, 609) of the second canon of hermeneutics:

The explanatory differentiation of the protean notion of being involves three elements. First, there is the genetic sequence in which insights gradually are accumulated by man. Secondly, there are the dialectic alternatives in which accumulated insights are formulated, with positions inviting further development and counterpositions shifting their ground to avoid the reversal they demand. Thirdly, with the advance of culture and effective education, there arises the possibility of the differentiation and specialization of modes of expression, and since this development conditions not only the exact communication of insights but also the discoverer's own grasp of his discovery, since such grasp and its exact communication intimately are connected with the advance of positions and the

reversal of counterpositions, the three elements in the explanatory differentiation of the protean notion of being fuse into a single explanation.

I note, in conclusion, first, that the point is made clearly in my two-page essay [HOW 6](#), “The Pullet’s Surprise”; secondly, that the issue I raise is not one of functional collaboration, but of a blatant dodging of Lonergan’s pointers, in *Insight*, regarding genetic development.