

*Joistings 15**What is Systematic Theology?*

There are two parts in this essay, but the first part is separated from the other by several months in which I focused on the question of the title in a manner that produced the work *Molecules, Minding, Meaning*.¹ In that first part I was, indeed, preparing myself, in September 2005, to read Doran's then forthcoming book, *What is Systematic Theology?*.² Fr. Doran and I had shared a common concern about that question during the previous decades and I was battling with my own perspective so as to be able to tune in properly to his push forward. The battle turned into the book on theology and botany in a way described in the Preface to that three-part book. Briefly, by the time Doran's work came into my hands, in mid-November, I had written two parts and reached what seemed to me a coherent operable view of the normative move forward in theology as scientific system, as communal global system. **Doran** presented me, us, with a chance to bring that operable view into play. In a sense, I did not take that chance - not yet - but what I actually did helps us towards seeing the task ahead of entering properly Lonergan's system of theology.

What did I do? I split the task of reflecting on Doran's achievement in two, taking as topic of my Part 3, "Structure and Anticipations" his two central chapters "Structure" and "Anticipations". This enabled me both to bring forward the manner in which we both were pushing for a unified view of theology as system and to highlight Doran's emphasis on Lonergan's magnificent integral Trinitarian perspective on grace. The latter has been "sitting there" uncherished and undeveloped for exactly fifty years, an

¹To appear from University of Toronto Press, 2008.

²University of Toronto Press, October, 2005. I refer to it here as **Doran**.

astonishing situation when one considers parallels in other zones of inquiry.³ Is Doran's highlighting of the revolutionary perspective sufficient to get that perspective into circulation?

That question leads me to the topic, What did I not do in Part 3 of *Molecules, Minding, Meaning*, besides postponing my reflection on the other chapters of **Doran**?

I did not put either my view or Doran's into circulation. Nor did Doran put his view into circulation.

But, you may muse, you did and Doran did: are not the two books out, is not this *Joisting* in circulation? So we are brought to the key issue not only of theology's method but of all contemporary studies of progress. What is it to bring a perspective into circulation?

For me, to bring into circulation is to make the efforts part of the system of theology, the gauge of theology as I call it later here. That circulation, the cycling process of functional specialization, has not emerged as yet. Why? That is the question towards which this *Joisting* leads. Within that transformed context, issues raised by Doran and me would be cycled into a general drive for progress, such as I describe happening in physics. Without that context, it would seem to be a matter of Doran and I doing our own relatively isolated thing. But our isolated thing happens to be the heart of the problem of 21st century theology.

My further discussion of Doran's work, then, is postponed in the hope of some change of ethos as we move towards the 50th anniversary of the emergence of *Insight*, the 40th anniversary of the discovery of the systems-gauge, the *nomos*, of theology in the future.⁴ The two sections to follow draw attention to analogies of science that might shake present conventions of Lonergan studies. The general intent of these *Joistings*

³The perspective is available in Lonergan's 1956 book on the Trinity, *Conceptio Analogica Divinarum Personarum*, Gregorian University Press.

⁴That discussion is a focus in my book, *Lonergan's Standard Model of Effective Global Inquiry.*, posted on the Website, September 1st 2007.

remains the same: to generate some beginnings of collaboration, particularly functional collaboration. Part of that intent is to invite a stand regarding the need to be personally luminous about what we are doing, whether it is systematic or not. Such luminosity would seem to be at the heart of Lonergan's suggestion of self-appreciation, which should surely stretch towards some form of communal, historic, self-appreciation.⁵ That topic bubbles up better, I hope, at the conclusion of the second part here.

I move then to the first part of this essay, which I have left as it was before I began *Molecules, Minding, Meaning*.

1. Systematics

The title obviously reminds you of Robert Doran's recent book, *What is Systematic Theology?*,⁶ and indeed that is the source of my title. I shall turn to it in the second section of this essay. But I wish first to place our reflections both in the simple context of the transformation of botany and in the complex context of the identification of systematic theology.

The fourth section of the previous *Joistings* sets a tone, and you notice from the final note there a pointer towards the need for a fuller analysis of genetic dynamics, axiomatized or not. But immediately there is a problem, one that repeats the problem that faced me in all the *Cantowers* in which I reflected on the chapter of *Insight* with the same number.⁷ And in this *Joisting* I have the peculiar oddness of a second return to chapter 15 of *Insight*. My previous reflection on it was in *Cantower 15*, "The Elements of Metaphysics", in which I discussed Stephen Jay Gould's massive book, *The Structure of*

⁵This becomes the topic of the later *Joistings 22*, titled "Mathew's Lonergan's Quest and Ours". *Joistings 21* and *22* were posted on the Website as preparation for the August Conference, in Vancouver, 2006, on the functional specialties of Research and Communications.

⁶Systematics has, of course, been a previous topic of mine: most recently in *Joistings 5*.

⁷I refer to the sequence *Cantowers 14-21* which parallel *Insight 14-20* and the Epilogue.

Evolutionary Theory,⁸ as a way of introducing certain aspects of chapter 15 of *Insight*. The general problem is contained in my comparison of the book *Insight* with a book of similar length which I read in the late 1950s, Joos, *Theoretical Physics*,⁹ a dense graduate compendium. *Insight*, at present, may profitably be considered as a dense graduate compendium without the backing of undergraduate texts.

This is most certainly true of Lonergan's treatment of development and of genetic method in the two final sections of chapter 15. But I would wish you to take slow note of the centrality of his effort there to the entire project of his book, indeed of his life. Were you asked where in *Insight* Lonergan spells out the nature of metaphysics, you might settle for his reflections in chapter 14. But here, as we begin the reading of section 7 of "Genetic Method" we find him making the claim that his effort here is "to prepare our statement of the integral heuristic structure that we have named metaphysics."¹⁰

It is a compendious doctrinal effort. Consider the four pages that he has on "Organic Development."¹¹ You do not need to avail of the parallel with **Joos**, to get a glimpse of the key difficulty here. One can use any compendious graduate text to help appreciate the problem. It was my parallel use of **Joos** and *Insight* that pushed me forwards in this matter. I recall the key parallel that held my attention: the parallel between the short treatment of planetary orbits in Joos and the same number of pages

⁸Harvard University Press, 2002, pp. 1339. I do not wish you to get distracted by Gould's work here, but it is worth noting that the parts of chapter 15 relevant to that Cantower are sections 1, 2, 3, 5. Section 4, "Potency and Limitation" was dealt with in Cantower 30, which I tackled the problem of energy. So sections 6 and 7 remained for comment, and I do that in the present section.

⁹Georg Joos, *Theoretical Physics*, Blackie and Son, London and Glasgow. My copy is the 1951 edition.

¹⁰*Insight*, 458[484].

¹¹*Insight*, 463-467[488-492].

Lonergan gave to hermeneutics. I had the advantage of lecturing on orbits in one my teaching careers: it was a matter of helping the students forward through various undergraduate texts towards a comfortable control of the meaning of Newton's laws. Did the Joos summary make sense? Certainly it makes sense to someone who has done the undergraduate work. And, for the beginner, there can be inspiration from a teacher who can give a broader view. Indeed, I would say that a broader view than Joos could be profitably intimated, regarding the geometric conjugation that eventually emerges from the study of the entities of physics. But that points us towards the difficult matter of cultural ethos and the general problem of historical reluctance. At all events, in simple terms, it is obvious that summary presentation, or reading, just does not cut it in undergraduate studies.

What, then, of the philosophic reader? Lonergan raises the problem immediately in the first sentences of that section. "How is development to be investigated? One has to follow the lead of the successful scientist."¹² And very quickly the reader is plunged into that famous doctrinal page, "Study of the organism begins...."¹³ That doctrinal page sketches the strategy of what one might call static organic studies. How does one make serious sense of it? Only with the help of a serious study of some 500 page texts on plant anatomy, physiology, chemistry.

Now the difficulty of that study of an undergraduate text is that it is, at present, written within a quite different metaphysics than Lonergan. The explicit metaphysics advocated by Lonergan is, of course, operative as a latent dynamic in writer, teacher, student. Common sense is on the side of that latent metaphysics. But in classroom and exam such common sense would be considered vulgar: we are pursuing a science of the dynamics of genes and proteins or whatever, and indeed of their use of coding and information. So, oddly, a deeper vulgarity prevails.

¹²*Insight*, 463[488].

¹³*Insight*, 464[489].

But one cannot get to grips with that vulgarity without venturing into the 500 page texts of an undergraduate program on botany. And to get to grips with it efficiently one has to replace those texts, in some future generations, with texts grounded in the actual dynamics of human inquiry. The journey to the efficient replacement is to be a functional system.

That last sentence must strike you as quite a leap. How is Lonergan's four pages on organic development to become effective in rescuing our cherishing of plants? Well, first notice - this is the main invitation of this essay - that it has had no effect whatever in the past fifty years. We are firmly fixed in the longer cycle of decline in plant studies. Can one shake up such studies? Perhaps if one were to write a book, or a doctorate thesis, *Beyond Establishment Botany*? I wonder would it have any more success than *Beyond Establishment Economics*?¹⁴ It seems to me that we can thus add such efforts to the ineffective responses to the longer cycle of decline, to the control of meaning by undifferentiated and truncated and malicious consciousness that characterizes most of present culture, present education, present government. "The better educated become a class closed in upon themselves with no task proportionate to their training."¹⁵ Indeed they are better educated in an old style that weaves them into decay and fails to identify the task of the educated or the character of education.

So we come once more to the problem of cosmopolis, but now identified as functional system¹⁶. However, that identification is a slow process, a large struggle. Lonergan failed to identify it in *Method in Theology* where, for example, functional cycling and re-cycling were scarcely mentioned much less thematically developed.

¹⁴Bruce Anderson and Philip McShane, *Beyond Establishment Economics. No Thank You, Mankiw*, Axial Press, Halifax, 2000.

¹⁵*Method in Theology*, 99.

¹⁶More on Cosmopolis, as realized in functional specialization, in *Joistings* 22.

Certainly he envisaged “successive grouping of groups”¹⁷ but he did not go on to specify the dynamic linkages in a manner successfully analogous to his heuristic specification of the dynamics of the plant. That specification, of course, is dependent on some level of implementation, but there are sufficient analogies with e.g. the success of physics, as global inquiry and technology, to spell out elements of that dynamic. In the previous reflection on chapter 15 of *Insight* I wrote of eight elements of meaning, which puzzled some of my readers :was I adding two new elements to Lonergan’s list of six? No: I was taking a stand on the importance of the global eight-fold division of labour in the pursuit of progress. The acceptance of Lonergan’s 6 elements of meaning, and the related levels of human consciousness, are to be the slow fruit of the implementation of that 8-element dynamic. To me, this is an obvious claim. Lonergan’s analysis of levels of consciousness, and of what is reached by the operations of each level are quite unacceptable in the general culture of the educated. Indeed, Lonergan’s entire body of work could be considered as *passe*.

What is global system? What is to be the foundational reality of the efficient lift towards that beauty of historical being? It is to be the community of those who are “cajoled or forced”¹⁸ into the cycling collaboration. But there must emerge some community that sees their way to the collaborative effort that I find is best thought of as a relay race, a functional baton exchange carried forward by a common *Praxisweltanschauung*. The community is to be omnidisciplinary, tuned to the manner in which the movement within any discipline slopes towards that of other disciplines so that there results a common dialectic, yielding common foundations in the group. Those foundations, rooted in the eight elemental divisions, shall not initially be common, but the success of the division of labour shall gradually win the day. But it shall win it not by some pseudo-dialogue with other views built into the structure: dialogue is to be the

¹⁷*Method in Theology*, 28.

¹⁸*Insight*, 398[423].

primary dynamic of the eighth specialty. The relevant initial dialogue is to be within the perspectival boundaries of relatively successful disciplines.

I write in brutal summary but what obviously is needed is a re-write of *Method in Theology*. But the re-write should reach courageously for a larger explanatory treatment of method, supported by the developed “Words of Metaphysics” or some equivalent metagrams. I do not fault Lonergan for not attempting this, tired and one-lunged in his late sixties. From conversations with him at that time he showed himself quite aware of the challenge, which he could not meet. But there are, too, slips in the writing, like the omission of a number (10) in his list of page 287: (10) would have placed the division of labour within the foundational perspective. On that same page, however, he pointed out that a good rewrite of *Method* would lift his early chapters into a full explanatory mode.

Later students of Lonergan shall thus rescue his perspective from present shrinkage. I like to think that I have contributed to the re-write by focusing on the one section where Lonergan did specify accurately the functional dynamics: section 5 of chapter 10, where he brilliantly identifies the operative challenge of doing dialectic properly. Some of my 200-odd pages written about that page should help others both with the rewrite and with the implementation. At 74 I would consider my task to be, not further writing or rewriting, but the encouragement of others to get the show on the roll.

I have identified systematics with the spiral of operations that is diagramed in W3 and in the Drawing which I called the Tower of Able.¹⁹ It is that identification that is to replace Thomas’ first question of the *Summa Theologica*. But what, then, are we to think of what used to be called systematics, a pattern of reflection that can be recognized in Thomas’ *Summae*?

¹⁹A *Brief History of Tongue* has, on page 124, the diagram which I call W3; the rectangle can be view as a tower when ‘cut out and rolled’.

Above I talked of a community with a common *Praxisweltanschauung*. What is that common *Weltanschauung* to be? It is to include the incarnate possession of the categorial determinants described in chapter 11 of *Method*. But it is also to include the continual cycling of the best available genetic systematics, which I shall here call pragmatics both to identify its orientation and to distinguish it from the old systematics. If you find this demand strange, think of the successful science of physics. It has its metaview, however muddled or latent, but what dominates the cycle, from research to invention, is the best available theoretic.

I see no point in enlarging on this here. Best await the publication of Robert Doran's work: hopefully he will spell out some of these facets of the long-term challenge.

2. What is Systematic Theology?

So we come, three months later, to Fr.Doran's recent work and the questions that he poses. Or I say, more properly, we do not come, or we are not yet prepared to come. *We?* I mean here the theological community, but that meaning itself is elusive. Yet, reflections in these early days of January 2006 lead me to envisage, fantasize, the value of expressing the larger challenge to theology - indeed, to progress-studies in general and so also to philosophy - involved in that preparation. That expression leans heavily on the analogy with successful science that Lonergan mentions at the beginning of *Method in Theology*, that indeed dominates his project in *Insight*. In the first section above I appeal to botany. Here I would turn to the more mature zone of physics, the less complex science that hovered over the first half of *Insight*.

I would ask you to have patience here with the sort of patience that is demanded by those erudite efforts at popularization that are the substance of *Scientific American*. Indeed, I hope I do a better job here, since I work from a better perspective on *haute vulgarization* than the authors of such efforts. This is not my first shot at raising this issue of standards and strategies of theology: an earlier shot is readily available in

chapter 4 of *Lack in the Beingstalk*, “The Calculus of Variation”, where the title points to the key parallel between the mature zone of inquiry that the title points to and the immature study that is present theology. But the past few years have pushed me towards an altogether more precise and remote view of the present situation. More on that later.

My approach here is to be biographic, autobiographic, historical. My drive can be summed up in an effort to get you to muse over a single sentence from the centrally relevant article on the history of twentieth century physics. The sentence is “All this is now familiar to students of physics and does not need to be explained in detail.”²⁰ The article, obviously, is the one cited in the previous footnote.

I wrote on this topic before, if not with my present precision, and I recall that writing here by quoting a key paragraph that recalls the life of one of the authors of the article **LORNS**.

“As I pattered through books in the Radcliffe Science Library, I was pleasantly surprised to come across the unmistakable name *Lochlainn O’Raifeartaigh*, of my graduate colleague in mathematical physics. His article, on “Broken Symmetry”,²¹ was worlds away from the quantum electrodynamics that we studied together in 1955-6. In the years between, and since, he has moved laboriously forward, in continuous and discontinuous transpositions of the best available views in the field. He is committed to thinking systematically, honestly, critically: he has no commitment to popularization. His commitment to thinking about the fundamental particles seems to me to be of a different caliber from that of many Christian theologians’ commitment to thinking

²⁰Lochlainn O’Raifeartaigh and Norbert Staumann, “Gauge Theory: Historical origins and some modern developments”, *Reviews of Modern Physics*, . Vol. 72 no. 1 (January 2000)., p. 8. I shall refer to this article below as **LORNS**.

²¹The article appears in *Group Theory and its Applications*, edited by Ernest M. Loebel, Academic Press, New York, 1968, Vol. 1, 275-298.

about the Fundamental Persons. Can it be permanently true, beyond the scope, then, of the emergent probability of Cosmopolis, that the children of this world are wiser than the children of light?"²²

That is the question I am raising, once again and probably for the last time, by drawing attention to that single sentence from *LORNS*. Shift the sentence into context of theology. "All this is now familiar to students of theology and does not need to be explained in detail." *This*, in the case focused on in the "Mission and Spirit" article, is the Trinitarian theology made available by Lonergan in 1956. Part of that Trinitarian theology is the piece of theology being highlighted by Doran exactly fifty years later. Was Lonergan in error perhaps? Then he should have been criticized and corrected then: it was too major a shift in the theoretic of God to ignore: if theology were a serious science. Which it is not.

In my last conversation with Lochlainn O'Raiheartaigh in the Summer of 2000 - he died that Autumn - he spoke of a recent illness optimistically, and of other theoreticians that we knew who had gone on for decades after retirement in their climbing search for the meaning of the fundamental particles. In particular, he spoke of the article with Straumann, and was quite chuffed by the fact that an included diagram, reproduced at the conclusion here, made the cover of the January 2000 *Reviews of Modern Physics*. He was geared up to push on, and could well have taken as life slogan the remark of Weyl which was quoted in the second paragraph of his collaborative article.

"Wider expanses and greater depths are now exposed to the searching eye of knowledge, regions of which we have not even a presentiment. It has brought us much

²²I am quoting from an article "Mission and Spirit" Questions of Probability and Providence", written in the late 1980s, published in a *Lonergan Workshop Volume* of about 1989, reproduced as Appendix 1 of *Process. Introducing Themselves to Young (Christian) Minders*, a book written in Oxford in the year September 1988 - June 1989. I failed to get the book published, but it is available on the Website.

nearer to grasping the plan that underlies all physical happenings.”²³

There are many fruitful points to be raised by paralleling serious searching in physics, illustrated by O’Raifeartaigh, and serious theology. The sentence I focused on from his article, however, points to a key failure of theology as in any sense a serious education. I merely invite you to ponder on it: it has been a topic of mine for more than four decades. But what I say in these next few pages adds to that context of reflection as well as giving a further nudge towards the cyclic process of doing theology.

Back then to **LORNS**, with its references to larger efforts of both authors. Let me stay with O’Raifeartaigh. His effort in those final years was to do history, and his achievement is a remarkable anticipation of work in that specialty. One may note that in a mature cycling of functional specialization in physics, he would not have had to do his own research and interpretation. But what I wish us to attend to is the control of his meaning that comes from his up-to-date systematic competence.²⁴ What was going forward after Einstein’s shifting of context? O’Raifeartaigh already has a systematic stand on the genesis and the end product. He fulfils Lonergan’s conditions regarding the competence required for writing the history of a science. The parallel with histories of twentieth century theology is embarrassing. Might you have a shot at producing a diagram that parallels the LORNS diagram? The parallel become more discomforting if one pushes, as Lonergan student, for a history of, say, Trinitarian theology, picking up on Lonergan as an Einstein of fifty years later, shifting the context in the lift which, with Doran, we may call the 4-hypothesis. No more about that for the present: we shall return to the topic in Joistings 18 and 20.

But I would like to draw attention to the failure manifested by comparison of the two areas in the zones of dialogue, inner scientific communication, and especially the

²³Herman Weyl, in the Preface to the first edition of *Raum, Zeit, Materie (Space, Time, Matter)*, 1918.

²⁴O’Raifeartaigh’s more systematic work is *Group Structure of Gauge Theory*, Cambridge University Press, 1986.

critical response which is systematized in the operation of *Completion* in Dialectic. O’Raifeartaigh includes in his analysis elements of the story of these zones. What is evident is that physics operated globally, rapidly - allowing for the shift from pen to e-mail etc), bitingly. The front-line community are on the alert for significant shifts, and the responses can be discomfotingly *complete*. Raifeartaigh’s book illustrates this consistently. Weyl’s magnificent push is seen to be flawed and his colleagues and friends tell him so in no uncertain terms. Sometimes further reflection tempers a previous sharpness or ridicule. So Pauli dislikes some of Weyl’s moves, talks of him as a mathematician wandering into physics, but later he writes “in contrast to the nasty things I said, the essential part of my last letter has since been overtaken, particularly by your paper in *Z. f. Physik*.”²⁵ There is the friction between Einstein and Bohr and to the whole Copenhagen mess of which Mead writes: Mead is quite clear on his reaction to that mess of the twentieth century.²⁶ There is a *Completion* to his response such that should find its way into later dialectic analysis: and does this not give a whole new meaning to *analysis*?

I may conclude these few remarks, indeed, by recalling the completeness of Mead’s reaction to a Feynman presentation of Maxwell. He was attending some of those famous introductory lectures of Feynman’s and disliked Feynman’s handling of Maxwellian electrodynamics. “I can remember feeling very angry why hadn’t he started [with **A**] and saved us all the mess of a **B** field which he told us himself was not real anyway?”²⁷ Feynman’s reply was vague and unsatisfactory and Mead is blunt about it. Later Mead talks of his admiration and friendship for Feynman, which did not

²⁵*The Dawning of Gauge Theory*, 108. On the same page O’Raifeartaigh quotes a reaction of Pauli to work by Salem: “Give my greetings to my friend Salem and tell him to think of something better’.

²⁶C. Mead, *Collective Electrodynamics*, MIT Press, 2000: the index, under Bohr-Einstein debate, and elsewhere under both names.

²⁷*Collective Electrodynamics*, xiii-xiv.

prevent such bluntness. In that context he makes a relevant point about dialogue in science. "In those days, physics was an openly combative subject - the one who blinked first lost the argument. Bohr had won his debate with Einstein that way, and the entire field adopted the style. Feynman learned the game well - he never blinked." Debates in theology do not have that dynamic, but worst, they lack the context of system, of pushing forward a theoretic that is commonly accepted. So, Mead takes issue with Feynman, and indeed with much of the 20th century bent, by twisting towards Collective Electrodynamics and a freshening of Maxwell's approach.

Coming round thus to Maxwell, brings us back to the question that heads this section, for I used Maxwell's 4-hypothesis as a parallel to Lonergan's 4-hypothesis in an effort to throw light on Doran's questions regarding the Lonergan shift as sufficient to ground a unified field theory, indeed to provide it with axioms. My response to Doran's view of the inadequacy of the 4-hypothesis for a contemporary slice of the seventh specialty is given in chapters 34 and 35 of *Molecules, Minding, Meaning*, but the context of that response is the discussion, in chapter 32, of physics' search for a unified field theory and the reflections, in chapter 33, on axiomatics. My difficulty of responding further is that that context is not shared by the Lonergan community. Indeed, the community seems to have little interest in Lonergan's larger massive achievement. His short paper in *Gregorianum* 1969 was "The Dawning of Gauge Theory" for theology. If one parallels that achievement with that of Einstein's General Theory fifty years earlier, then one fails to find a parallel to the bubbling forward of the end of the second decade of the century that is represented by, say, Weyl and Eddington. Einstein focused on gravitation: the push since has lifted the basic perspective into a full gauge view of the entities of physics. Lonergan focused on theology: a full gauge view would reach out to all the beings of meaning of inquiry. As it is, however, his disciples are reluctant even to have a shot at a new gauging of theology. Is it not overdue for some of the members of that community to ask the question that parallels, for functional specialization, O'Raifeartaigh's historical investigation of the lesser gauging of being in the simplest of

sciences? What went on, what is going on, in theology? What went on, what is going on, in Lonergan studies? Might there be a need of something like Mead's reaction to the Copenhagen clan? Might such a reaction give a nudge towards Collective Theodynamics that would parallel, indeed sublate, Mead's *Collective Electrodynamics*?