

## Some Notes on the Development of *Method*, Page 250

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“This—how soon it will catch on, how well it will catch on, I don’t know. But there was a lot of opposition to *Verbum* when it first appeared, a lot of opposition to *Insight*. . . . It [functional specialization] will be no more received by the traditional understanding than Marx was received by the nineteenth century.”

Lonergan (1973)<sup>1</sup>

“If the great discoveries result only from a slow accumulation of little insights, it also follows that the road to the great awakening is shrouded in darkness. One grasps one little thing after another, but the significance of catching on to this and then catching on to that remains hidden. That significance will come to light only at the end of the journey.”

Lonergan (1976)<sup>2</sup>

“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.”

Philip McShane (2011)<sup>3</sup>

### 1. Introduction: A Revolutionary Idea

It is intriguing—and for some, perhaps, surprising—to hear Lonergan’s own assessment of the radicality of his great discovery. He knew he had given birth to a

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<sup>1</sup> Archival item 74600A0E070(part two of a recording of a discussion between Lonergan and various professors from McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, on February 6, 1973 [4:35-5:48]). See also 52600DTE060/69-6b, at 21 (the sixth of the 1969 Regis Institute lectures, July 14, 1969) (“*When is such a method likely to be accepted?* I don’t know; give us time. Karl Marx, in the 19th century, was just an old man, with a big beard, wasting his time in the British Museum.”)

Citations to archival material will be to the number assigned to documents on the Lonergan Archive website, <http://www.bernardlonergan.com>. My many thanks go to Bob Doran and Greg Lauzon for the huge labor of making the Lonergan Archives (both documents and recordings) available online.

<sup>2</sup> 28410DTE070, at 3.

<sup>3</sup> Philip McShane, FuSe 16, ms., at 1.

revolutionary idea,<sup>4</sup> and he rightly expected entrenched resistance to this timely, original, and complex idea, schooled as he was in the adverse reactions generally provoked by his earlier works. And given his acute grasp of ‘the global reach’ of the general bias of common sense, he would hardly be surprised to find a solid block of inertial resistance to the radically new idea. “More or less automatically and unconsciously, each successive batch of possible and practical courses of action is screened to eliminate as unpractical whatever does not seem practical to an intelligence and a willingness that not only are developed imperfectly but also suffer from bias.”<sup>5</sup> More or less automatically and unconsciously, we read that sentence as though somehow it were not referring to us.<sup>6</sup>

Functional collaboration as sketched by Lonergan is intended, at least in part, as a counterpoise to the dictatorship of general bias and as an antidote to this universal human disease.<sup>7</sup> But it may also be true that, ironically, the method itself has fallen victim to it. As a radically new practical idea with enormous institutional and cultural implications, functional collaboration required above all—as Lonergan said in a related context—“a cultural change, out of feudal order and classicist culture, into contemporary dynamism in arrangements and thinking.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See the first epigraph and n.1 above. From the context of his remarks, by “the traditional understanding” Lonergan appears to have meant the classical or classicist understanding. Roughly speaking, one may say that functional collaboration stands to present understanding of method as Marx’s ideas stood to the then-traditional mentality. Some intimation of the dimensions of the revolutionary shift from current expectations may be gleaned from a remark Lonergan made in May 1965, three months after his discovery of functional specialization. “There’s no doubt that there has to be a transposition of the values of classicism, but the transposition won’t end up with something that the classically orientated and formed mind will expect. It will be something out of his world.” 43200DTE060, at 2 (questions and answers following the lecture, “Dimensions of Meaning”).

<sup>5</sup> *Insight*, 628; CW 3, at 651.

<sup>6</sup> See below, pages 9-14.

<sup>7</sup> I recall Pat Byrne telling the story of bumping into Lonergan on a walk at BC in the late 1970s. They fell to talking about Eric Voegelin, and Lonergan quipped, “Oh, Voegelin, he’s wonderful! What I call a counter-position, he calls a *disease*.”

<sup>8</sup> 27910DTE070, at 5 (Lonergan’s notes for his responses to questions at the BC Workshop, June 17, 1976).

Cultural changes do not come easily, and certainly not cultural changes of the magnitude Lonergan envisioned. The task of replacing a classicist control of meaning with a new kind of control of meaning that harmonizes with the fact of development, and with the dynamics of development, is not merely a cultural sea-change, however vast. It is an epochal shift whose nature and features are unimaginable from within the pre-shift horizon.<sup>9</sup> But for the shift to involve renewal, and not just collapse, its implementation has to be organic and nuanced, not mechanical and ham-fisted. It has to involve a genetic and dialectical retrieval of past achievement along with a discerning disengagement from its limitations,<sup>10</sup> instead of its mere blank negation. Above all, it will take a great deal of time and a vast but concerted effort. It is within this context that Lonergan for decades labored to work out a methodical basis for collaboration in theology and in the human sciences, and it is within this context that the non-reception of the radicality of functional specialization is more than a little disconcerting.

So it is sobering to consider that Lonergan's prediction concerning the reception of *Method* may have been excessively optimistic. *Method in Theology* was published

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<sup>9</sup> Imagination plays a huge role in the genesis of understanding, especially the understandings that grasp possible courses of action and "that reveal the alternative possibilities of the concrete situation." *Insight*, 692; CW 3, at 714. See also McShane, "A Reform of Classroom Performance," 13 *Divyadaan* (2002) 279-309, at 285 (speaking of "pursuing the functional specialty of foundations in its central role of Fantasy, of challenging present unlife with future probabilities"); McShane, "The Proximate Emergence of Functional Collaboration," in *Sane Economics and Fusionism* (Vancouver: Axial Publishing, 2010), 83-91. Some significant and perhaps wrenching effort of imagination is required to envision a mature community of collaborators working with and in the organic framework of collaboration so briefly and laconically sketched by Lonergan in *Method*.

<sup>10</sup> "The Absence of God in Modern Culture," *A Second Collection*, 113. On genetic and dialectical retrieval, see also *Insight* on the notion of a universal viewpoint, especially its components of a "retrospective expansion" and a "dialectical expansion," and compare that context with history and dialectic as functional specialties. Compare also the comment in *Method* that what in *Insight* "is termed a universal viewpoint is here realized by advocating a distinct functional specialty named dialectic." *Method*, 153, n.1; *Insight*, 565; CW 3, at 588-89 ("It has its base in an adequate self-knowledge and in the consequent metaphysics. It has a retrospective expansion in the various genetic series of discoveries through which man could advance to his present knowledge. It has a dialectical expansion in the many formulations of discoveries due to the polymorphic consciousness of man ...")

almost forty years ago. Marx published the first volume of *Capital* in 1867, and forty years later the movement was up and running.<sup>11</sup> And what of Phil McShane's prediction? It is by definition far too soon to tell whether it is optimistic, or pessimistic, or simply obvious. But it is not too soon to suspect that it, too, may be automatically and unconsciously screened by neurally-netted plausibility structures that are themselves the product of underdeveloped intelligence and defective willingness.

Still, both Lonergan's revolution and McShane's optimism have two things on their side. The first is the fact that "after all, the essence of emergent probability in human history is insight into situations."<sup>12</sup> The situation of contemporary human sciences is rife with conflicts and therefore ripe for method. At some point, something like the needed cultural shift will have to emerge;<sup>13</sup> in the long run, the only alternative to it is academic or cultural bedlam or babel, or perhaps pandemonium.

The second is the fact that, for Lonergan, functional specialization, functional collaboration, functionally structured disciplines, more or less represent "the conditions of the possibility of fruitful change."<sup>14</sup> An "earlier, individualist view of science"<sup>15</sup> and of human knowing is rapidly passing from the scene. It is increasingly obvious that

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<sup>11</sup> Perhaps there is a more hopeful way to view this delay. "A too rapid acceptance would risk being superficial, and a superficial acceptance would betray the method with superficial performance. What is to be hoped for is the open-eyed and fully deliberate acceptance that brings forth solid fruits and thereby initiates a movement." "Bernard Lonergan Responds (1)," CW 20, at 273.

<sup>12</sup> 27910DTE070, at 4.

<sup>13</sup> McShane's views on this may be found in any number of his writings over the past few decades. See, e.g., "Scientific Methods and the Investigation of Ultimate Meanings," *Journal of Ultimate Reality and Meaning*, 11 (1988) 142-144 ("There is, then, an internal dynamic within serious inquiry that pushes with the inevitability of emergent probability towards methodological structures adequate to both subject and object of inquiry.")

<sup>14</sup> 27910DTE070, at 4 ("What the church of today suffers is the conflict between feudal elements in its structures and classicist elements in its thought on the one hand and on the other the conditions of the possibility of fruitful change.") Functional collaboration as one of the conditions of the possibility of fruitful change is, I think, a plausible extrapolation from the context that Lonergan has in mind.

<sup>15</sup> Lonergan, "The Ongoing Genesis of Methods," *A Third Collection*, ed. Frederick Crowe (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 146-165, at 148.

almost any form of human knowing is a group project, and the larger and more nuanced the project, the more the effort cries out for a suitably efficient division of the labor. The need for such a division is by now obvious, though the exact nature of the division is not. As McShane has noted in speaking of the functional specialties, “a struggle of forty years has shown me that their meaning is remote, a program for a massive shift in global cultural reflection.”<sup>16</sup>

## 2. A Long Journey to Reflective Global Cultural Revolution

We know, of course, that Lonergan’s journey towards the discovery of functional specialization was a long one, and the road to that “great awakening” is indeed shrouded in darkness. How long was it? Lonergan began writing *Method in Theology* in 1949. That is not a joke, nor is it a misprint. Lonergan began a draft introduction to *Method* with precisely that assertion.<sup>17</sup> This shifts one’s perspective on *Method* in many ways, but for me the most salient shift may be this: I find it *a priori* unlikely that a genius of Lonergan’s caliber would labor for twenty-two years to produce something resembling a filing system, as Phil McShane has described one not-unpopular notion of functional specialization.

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<sup>16</sup> SOFDAWARE 2, “Reading *Method in Theology*, page 250,” at 3. The acronym for that series stands, in part, for “structure of dialectic” (SOFD). The eight-part series may be found at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/sofdaware.html>.

<sup>17</sup> 69900DTE060, at 3, draft pages from 1970 or 1971 for page one of an introduction to *Method* (“I began work on this book in 1949.” [first sentence]) See also 32790DTE070, at 2 (letter dated December 31, 1976) (“Method was not a new idea. I was aware of the mess theology was in and considered the transposition from the question of the “nature” of theology to the “method” of theology to be the essential step. The work I did on verbum and in Insight was just two stages in a program towards writing on method in theology. Indeed from 1949 to 1952 my work on Insight was conceived as the first part of my Method in Theology.”)

So it was a long and winding journey,<sup>18</sup> and a shrouded one, and its significance only came to light at the very end of the journey. Yet the end of the journey casts a backward light on even the earliest stages in that journey. In 1943, Lonergan wrote of “the great republic of culture,”<sup>19</sup> a world that includes but moves well beyond “the urbanity and collaboration of contemporaries.”<sup>20</sup> For that republic is based, in part, on “contemporaries’ esteem for the great men of the past, on whose shoulders they stand, and in their devotion to the men of the future, for whom they set the stage of history for better or worse.”<sup>21</sup> An esteem for the greatness of past achievement, which has made us what we are, combined with a devotion to greater future achievement, together with a concern for ‘setting the stage of future history’ for the better, rather than for the worse—these already were the themes weaving through Lonergan’s thinking.

Perhaps one might think of functional collaboration as the Constitution of that republic, or at least the means by which it will be recurrently and progressively constituted and reconstituted. For functional collaboration, too, embodies esteem for the human past and devotion to the humans of the future, for whom we set the stage of history, for better or for worse. And if Lonergan began drafting that Constitution in 1949, its early drafts no less than its final version reveal an emphasis not only on understanding the past but also on shaping the future. Already in *Insight* he notes the need for some structure to guide future *praxis*: “Nor is it enough to understand the

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<sup>18</sup> Each period of his development within this arc is complex in its own right. As Bob Doran has asserted, “The Lonergan of the period from the publication of *Insight* in 1957 to the breakthrough to functional specialization in 1965 is one of the most complex figures in 20th-century intellectual history. ... it will take Lonergan students quite some time before they really grasp what was going forward in his developments during these years.” “System and History: The Challenge to Catholic Systematic Theology,” 60 *Theological Studies* (1999), 653, n.3. Something similar can be said, I believe, of the period from 1965 to 1971.

<sup>19</sup> “Finality, Love, Marriage,” *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 4, *Collection* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 39.

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*

situation; it must also be managed. Its intelligible components have to be encouraged towards fuller development; and its unintelligible components have to be hurried to their reversal”; the “proposals and programmes” that are “implemented” must be truly and not merely putatively intelligent and reasonable.<sup>22</sup>

But if methodical and functional collaboration is the Constitution of a great republic of culture, it is a republic and a culture unlike anything we have yet seen. What to call such a new culture?<sup>23</sup> One could give it an odd Greek-classical name, say, “Cosmopolis.” Or one could give it a sort of Joycean Biblical-classical name, say, “The Tower of Able.” Yet call it what you will, unless you name it as strange and as not yet known, you are fatally likely to assimilate it to an existing and defective horizon rather than to recognize it as the radically novel and revolutionary thing Lonergan evidently thought it was. And whatever its name, it is, as Lonergan insists, somehow profoundly “concerned with the fundamental issue of the historical process.”<sup>24</sup>

If the Constitution of that great republic is the structure Lonergan eventually sketched under the rubric of ‘functional specialization,’ then perhaps no one has done more than Philip McShane to further and to foster the project of its workings.<sup>25</sup> That is no mean feat. Because one has to say, in hindsight, that Lonergan was brutally correct in his projection of the reception-history of functional specialization and collaboration: It

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<sup>22</sup> *Insight*, 629; CW 3, at 652.

<sup>23</sup> See *Insight*, chapter seven, § 8.5 (“Culture and Reversal”), 236-238; CW 3, at 261-263. That section is the section immediately preceding the section on “Cosmopolis.”

<sup>24</sup> *Insight*, 239; CW 3, at 263.

<sup>25</sup> See, e.g., McShane, *Lonergan’s Standard Model of Effective Global Enquiry*, together with *Method in Theology: Revisions and Implementations*, the *Cantower* series, the *FieldNocturne Cantower* series, the *SOFDAWARE* series, the *Quodlibet* series, as well as other searchings, reachings, and writings, all of which may be found on his website, <http://www.philipmcsane.ca>. These materials are, to my knowledge, the most extensive and nuanced reflections on functional specialization yet to appear in any form. In addition, McShane’s contributions include an extended sequence of electronic seminars on the functional specialties. The second seminar, on “functional interpretation,” began on April 27, 2011, and will run through July 5<sup>th</sup>. Additional seminars on each functional specialty will follow.

has been no more received by the traditional understanding than Marx was received by the nineteenth century. In fact, sadly, it has fared worse.

### 3. Some Clues on *Method*, Page 250

This paper is a very preliminary report on my initial efforts to understand a significant page in Lonergan's work. At this point, my attempt is awkward, provisional, and pre-functional, but at the moment that cannot be helped.<sup>26</sup> My longer-term effort is to begin to de-compact "the techniques of [the] fourth specialty, dialectic"<sup>27</sup> that include the six italicized words on that page. But here I hope only to plausibly illustrate the truth of McShane's contentions regarding the significance of that page.

My central thesis is that *Method*, 250 is both more complex and more important than we normally or usually suppose. There may be many reasons for that discrepancy. One of them may be that we 'more or less automatically and unconsciously'<sup>28</sup> play the reactionaries to Lonergan's Marx—reactionaries *malgré nous*, but reactionaries nonetheless.<sup>29</sup> It is not, after all, so easy to escape the subtler forms of a merely inertial conservatism backed by some residual "sin of backwardness,"<sup>30</sup> tacitly embedded in accepted practices, and regularly reinforced by "the concrete and almost irradicable form

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<sup>26</sup> On functional research, see, e.g., McShane, FuSe 3, "Functional Research into Lonergan's Collected Works," <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/fuse-03.pdf>. As of yet I have only a dim glimmer of what functional research might be. But it is at least clear that researchers bring to bear a grip on the standard model of the field in its contemporary development. See *Insight*, 581; CW 3, at 602-04 (note the reference to "collaborat[ing] in light of common but abstruse principles" involving "individual results checked by general requirements that envisage simultaneously the totality of results."); see also McShane, "Functional Collaboration for Dummies," *Sane Economics and Fusionism* (Vancouver: Axial Publishing, 2010), 62-64.

<sup>27</sup> *Method*, 195.

<sup>28</sup> *Insight*, 628; CW 3, at 651.

<sup>29</sup> Lonergan expected something like this, or at least anticipated the possibility, in one of his early manuscripts relating to *Method*. 58700DTEL60, at 38 ("Ninthly, might we once and for all remind the reader that once the new context is introduced, one may not revert to the old without confusion and fallacy. ... It would be a blunder, if not mere ill will, to relate the methods of the new context in the manner appropriate to relating sciences in the old context." [crossed-out text in draft]).

<sup>30</sup> Lonergan, "Dialectic of Authority," *A Third Collection*, 8.

of achievements, institutions, habits, customs, mentalities, characters.”<sup>31</sup> Or perhaps we merely suffer from garden varieties of selective inattention.<sup>32</sup> Yet another reason may be that we are used to old styles of reading that turn out to be quite inadequate in the new context,<sup>33</sup> so that we have become ‘more or less automatically and unconsciously’ accustomed to what McShane calls “ordinary non-reading.”<sup>34</sup>

### A. “The Ethics of Reading”

Before I attempt to trace and track some of the development of the first half of page 250 using archival material, I want to draw attention to a relatively important but neglected topic in Lonergan studies, a topic which Phil McShane has attempted to make thematic in various ways over the course of several decades. It can be given different names, but I want to discuss it now, briefly, under the rubric of “the ethics of reading.”<sup>35</sup>

In reading, as in all human reaching, there is bound to be a recurring and sometimes ironic contrast between “soaring ambition and faltering performance.”<sup>36</sup> Here, as elsewhere, that contrast can stem from imperfectly developed intelligence, or from the cumulative effects of a personal or communal flight from understanding, or from defects or distortions in one’s pattern of antecedent willingness, or from poorly adapted sensibility, or from some other form or level of the failure of self-transcendence. Again, just as there is an inverted and perverted “priority of living to learning how to live,”<sup>37</sup> so

<sup>31</sup> Lonergan, “Analytic Concept of History” (1938), *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 11 (1993) 3–35, at 21–22.

<sup>32</sup> *Insight*, 203; CW 3, at 227, n.9 (describing the psychiatrist Harry Stack Sullivan’s notion of “a marvelous ‘selective inattention’ to what is significant”).

<sup>33</sup> See above, footnote 29.

<sup>34</sup> Quodlibet 5, “A Simple Reading of *Method in Theology*, Page 250,” at 5.

<sup>35</sup> I am borrowing the term, though not the meaning he gives it, from J. Hillis Miller, *The Ethics of Reading* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987). While he speaks of “a new ethics of reading,” *id.* at 338, his own deconstructive sketch probably falls under his assertion that “good reading does not occur all that often, not as often as one might perhaps expect or wish.” *Id.* Certainly it is true that good reading is no more a matter of good intentions than good acting is.

<sup>36</sup> *Method*, 36.

<sup>37</sup> *Insight*, 693; CW 3, at 715.

too there is an inverted and perverted priority of reading to learning how to read. At any rate, there can be little doubt, I think, that “the end of the age of innocence”<sup>38</sup> applies to the recurrent gap between sincere ambition and faltering performance in the task of serious reading. Certainly Lonergan did not doubt it.<sup>39</sup>

I want to dwell for a moment on this elementary issue, both because Phil McShane has been drawing our vagrant attention to it for decades, and because it serves as a useful propaedeutic to thinking about that very odd and important page in *Method*, a page which has received almost no serious or sustained treatment in the Lonergan literature since its publication.<sup>40</sup> For as McShane points out, “the hard fact is that this high point in his life, this program-page, has attracted no serious attention, and certainly nothing like the reading of it into history for which it cries out.”<sup>41</sup>

Elsewhere McShane compares page 250 to a “medieval [person] writing of the scientific revolution in a gloriously heuristic yet contemporarily incomprehensible fashion.”<sup>42</sup> How would it be received by his or her then-contemporary audience? It depends on the operative *ethos* of the receiving audience, but the chances of even

<sup>38</sup> “The Ongoing Genesis of Methods,” *A Third Collection*, ed. Frederick Crowe (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 146-165, at 147, 156, 157, 159, and 160. Reading is not somehow a pre-ethical activity.

<sup>39</sup> See, e.g., the “Epilogue” to *Verbum*, CW 2, at 223; *Method in Theology*, ch. 7, §5, “Understanding Oneself,” 161 (“The major texts ... are beyond the initial horizons of their interpreters ... In this case, the interpreter’s initial understanding of the object is just inadequate. He will come to know it only in so far as he pushes ... to a revolution in his own outlook ... a radical change in himself.”)

<sup>40</sup> A few brave Lonergan scholars have ventured into the details of page 250. See, e.g., Mathew Lamb, *History, Method, and Theology: A Dialectical Comparison of Wilhelm Dilthey’s Critique of Historical Reason and Bernard Lonergan’s Meta-Methodology* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978), xviii-xx, n.9; Terry Tekippe, *Papal Infallibility: An Application of Lonergan’s Theological Method* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1983), 200-235; Frank Braio, “The ‘Far Larger’ Work of *Insight*’s Epilogue,” 16 Lonergan Workshop 49-66, at 52-54 (2000).

<sup>41</sup> Philip McShane, SOFDAWARE 2, “Reading *Method in Theology*, page 250,” at 8.

<sup>42</sup> Quodlibet 11, “*Method in Theology*, Page 250: The Six Italicized Words,” 8 (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/quodlibet.html>). See also Pierrrot Lambert and Philip McShane, *Bernard Lonergan: His Life and Leading Ideas* (Vancouver: Axial Publishing, 2010), 11-12 (“Think of that page as paralleled by some medieval writing of a similar page about the sublation of Kepler’s, Newton’s, and Einstein’s shifts that emerges in Gauge Theory. Such a page would even baffle Einstein. Our problem now is that the parallel is quite beyond most of those presently interested in Lonergan and in his discovery of 1965.”)

glimmering reception are fairly low. What is received is received after the manner of the receiver, as the medieval tag goes. What is the manner of us, as receivers?<sup>43</sup>

Lonergan highlights the ethical dimensions and challenges of reading in a number of passages. One pointed example is his insistence that “the scientific effort to understand is blocked by a pretence that one understands already,”<sup>44</sup> and I can think of no reason why that general principle would not also be true of the specific case involving scientific efforts to interpret. Those dimensions and challenges are also implicit in the existential dimension of hermeneutics. How easy it is, for example, to read that very phrase, “the existential dimension of hermeneutics,” in a way that tacitly assumes one adequately understands the meaning already, in a way that fails to pause over the multiple known-unknowns named in the phrase, in a way that rushes right past the abyss of oneself.<sup>45</sup> Whatever else may be true, “good reading” in the new context demands a departure from the norms and procedures of ordinary non-reading. In the fullest sense of both words, “good reading demands slow reading, not just the dancing *allegro*. A good

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<sup>43</sup> We do not normally embody the manner movingly described by Rilke in the poem Gadamer chose as the epigraph for *Truth and Method*. The lines are from a poem written two days before Rilke commenced the “Sonnets for Orpheus.” “Solang due Selbstgeworfnes fängst, ist alles,” “As long as you catch self-thrown things,” in Rainer Maria Rilke, *Uncollected Poems: Bilingual Edition*, trans. Edward Snow (New York: North Point Press, 1996), 138-39.

<sup>44</sup> *Insight*, 505; CW 3, at 529.

<sup>45</sup> I have in mind three expanding contexts intimating the mystery that we are. First, Augustine’s comment on Psalm 41. “If by ‘abyss’ we understand a great depth, is not man’s heart an abyss? For what is there more profound than that abyss? Men may speak, may be seen by the operations of their members, may be heard speaking: but whose thought is penetrated, whose heart is seen into?” *St. Augustine’s Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, vol. 8, ed. Philip Schaff and Arthur Coxe (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 136. Second, Chesterton’s remark that “There is at the back of all our lives an abyss of light, more blinding and unfathomable than any abyss of darkness; and it is the abyss of actuality, of existence, of the fact that things truly are, and that we ourselves are incredibly and sometimes almost incredulously real.” *The Collected Works of G.K. Chesterton*, vol. XVIII: *Chaucer* (1932)(San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 172-73. Third, Chesterton’s contention that “Every man has forgotten who he is. One may understand the cosmos, but never the ego; the self is more distant than any star.” *Orthodoxy*, intro. by Philip Yancey (New York: Image Books, 2001), 51.

reader is someone on whom nothing in a text is lost, as James said a good writer is in relation to life: ‘Try to be one of those on whom nothing is lost.’<sup>46</sup>

That is an awfully tall order. But is it not the order of battle of *Insight*, ch. XVII, §3.2, the order of “potential completeness”<sup>47</sup>? What, after all, or all in all, does it take to become a reader “on whom nothing is lost”? To begin with, certainly, one would need to incarnate a serious heuristic perspective.<sup>48</sup> But there is no reason to rush to answer that question, and many reasons not to.

“What is that care, you-caring thus to turn the page to **read** [page 250], to be **impressed** by that greeting? For it is not something familiar called *care* but the molecular oddity named you that reaches an appendage out to swing a thin slice of being through 180 degrees to begin again and again and again, word-openings to your future. We are not in a hurry. You could well poise, hold the page-slice vertical, the door half open.”<sup>49</sup>

These spatially ordered marks on the non-out-there-now page, these evoked images and gestures, impress and impinge in a more concrete, personal, mystery-toned, and perhaps irritating way—might it be productively irritating, though? And if not, then how is your-my-our response related to the problem of an inadequately developed antecedent willingness to read seriously, and to the psychic rootedness of that unwillingness? At some level and in some way these marks invite a pause that half opens the door to the problem of “an intelligence and a willingness that not only are developed imperfectly but

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<sup>46</sup> J. Hillis Miller, *On Literature* (London: Psychology Press, 2002), 122. For instances of the kind of revolutionary ethics of reading and reaching required to reach up to the mind of Lonergan, see above, n.25.

<sup>47</sup> *Insight*, 566; CW 3, at 590.

<sup>48</sup> Unless this is true, the notions of a universal viewpoint and a methodical hermeneutics are a superfluous exercise in some bloodless academic ballet choreographed by someone with a ‘Rube Goldberg love of complexity.’ CW 2, at 195. On diagrams and heuristics, see McShane, Prehumous 2, “Metagrams and Metaphysics,” <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/prehumous-02.pdf>.

<sup>49</sup> Quodlibet 11, “*Method in Theology*, Page 250: The Six Italicized Words,” 3. The bolding is in the original, and is followed by a footnote: “The boldface print merely alerts you to the neurochemical oddities that one normally does not think of: where the reading resides and what Thomas would call the **species impressa**.”

also suffer from bias.”<sup>50</sup> We are generically and all-too-humanly unwilling to pause, to admit we don’t know, to name and then disengage the very common and very human “pretence that one understands already.”<sup>51</sup> And so we are the readers on whom much is lost.

Including, perhaps, page 250. I have a suspicion that McShane’s position on page 250<sup>52</sup> strikes many as exaggerated, if not outlandish or outrageous. But the only real alternative to it, it seems to me, is the extremely implausible view that Lonergan spent 22 years of his life laboring to give birth to a kind of fascinating but ultimately otiose academic filing system. This simply does not fit the data.

In Lonergan’s words, “there are eight different tasks to be performed, and eight different sets of methodical precepts that have to be distinguished.”<sup>53</sup> Page 250 unmistakably specifies one of those eight sets of methodical precepts with some precision. “Each of the specialties,” in turn, “is functionally related to the others.”<sup>54</sup> Are the operations and procedures sketched on page 250 related to this assertion? How could they not be? And in their organic and functional interdependence, these “different sets of methodical precepts” are relevant to the whole range of human sciences and would—does this “reveal the alternative possibilities of the concrete

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<sup>50</sup> *Insight*, 628; CW 3, at 651. It was not until very recently that I noticed that Lonergan prefaces the section on “the truth of interpretation” in *Insight* with two very pointed paragraphs on “the ethics of reading.” *Insight*, 561-62; CW 3, at 584-85. The same theme runs throughout the work, however implicitly. How is one to read, ethically, the sentence, “The general bias of common sense involves sins of refusal as well as of mere omission”? *Insight*, 228; CW 3, at 253. How is one to read, ethically, the prior sentence, the one which claims that recurring large-scale “disasters ... can be prevented from recurring only by subordinating common sense to a higher specialization of human intelligence”? *Insight*, 228; CW 3, at 253.

<sup>51</sup> *Insight*, 505; CW 3, at 529.

<sup>52</sup> See the third epigraph, above at 1, and also Quodlibet 5, “A Simple Reading of *Method in Theology*, Page 250,” at 6 (“Reading it seriously means reading it with a powerful tutored energy of fantasy, something that does not characterize our axial times.”)

<sup>53</sup> *Method*, 136-37.

<sup>54</sup> *Method*, 137.

situation”?<sup>55</sup>—revolutionize all of them. “These eight functional specialties can be transposed to any subject in which an investigation of the past is consciously relevant to man’s future action.”<sup>56</sup> Functional collaboration, then, comprises “a fundamental doctrine of distinct and serially connected methods.”<sup>57</sup>

Moreover, this “fundamental doctrine” is, on Lonergan’s account, relevant to actuating the potentialities of “Christian living” and to “taking advantage of the opportunities offered by world history.”<sup>58</sup> In short, it is not a filing system. It is, instead, related to what Lonergan **in *Insight*** called “**future history**.”<sup>59</sup> It represents nothing less than Lonergan’s decades-long-gestated contribution to what *Insight* calls the “control of the emergent probability of the future exercised . . . by mankind in its consciousness of its responsibility to the future of mankind.”<sup>60</sup> It represents—but to whom? and under the constraints of what manner of receiving?—the possibility of “a human contribution to the control of human history.”<sup>61</sup>

### **B. Dating *Method*, 250**

When Lonergan wrote that his book *Method in Theology* began in 1949, he was by no means joking. Attempting to adequately and accurately trace the history of that work’s emergence inevitably would be, to steal a phrase, “the inception of a far larger

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<sup>55</sup> *Insight*, 692; CW 3, at 714.

<sup>56</sup> CW 22, at 614.

<sup>57</sup> 73100DTE060, at 2.

<sup>58</sup> *Method*, 145.

<sup>59</sup> *Insight*, 233; CW 3, at 258. “Future history” was not a minor category for Lonergan. He uses it to refer to the whole project of functional specialization in theology or in any other discipline. “Moreover, while our presentation was conceived with reference to theology, it could be adapted to any subject in which investigators were responding to past history and were to influence future history.” 53200DTE060 Regis 69 10, at 13 (transcript of lecture at Regis College Institute on Method in Theology on “Horizons and Categories,” July 18, 1969). See also the reference to future history in “Finality, Love, Marriage,” cited above at n.21.

<sup>60</sup> *Insight*, 227; CW 3, at 252.

<sup>61</sup> *Insight*, 227; CW 3, at 252.

one.”<sup>62</sup> And one could rightly say that in the end he was “forced to be content with the inner logic of the plan with which [he] began. From a succession of lower contexts there was gradually to emerge an upper context. ... The upper context was to be constituted ... by the fuller invariant structure that adds reasonable choice and action to intelligent and reasonable knowing.”<sup>63</sup> It was, indeed, “gradually to emerge.” The succession of lower contexts gradually making possible the emergence of the upper context of *Method*, with its “fuller invariant structure” oriented towards praxis, span some 22 years. Here I want to take only a few brief slices of that span, and only for the restricted purpose of shedding some limited light on the first half of page 250 of *Method*.

The composition of *Method* was a complex process, and it is not always possible to date stages of its composition with complete certainty. Still, for my limited purposes it will be useful to assign certain broadly verifiable dates or ranges to the process leading up to page 250. As we know, Lonergan’s fundamental breakthrough occurred in February, 1965.<sup>64</sup> At some point shortly thereafter, he took a shot or two at drafting an introduction to his book on method.<sup>65</sup> Apparently soon after that effort, his lung cancer was discovered in August 1965. The operation and the resulting months-long recuperation left him sidelined through much of the spring of 1966.<sup>66</sup> By mid-May, 1966, he had begun working on an entirely different early draft for *Method*, chapter 1 (then titled “The New Context”).<sup>67</sup> A complete draft of some 60 pages of “The New

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<sup>62</sup> *Insight*, 731; CW 3, at 754.

<sup>63</sup> *Insight*, 731-32; CW 3, at 754.

<sup>64</sup> File 47200D0E060.

<sup>65</sup> File 47500DTE060 (8 pages marked “METHOD” chapter one, describing inter alia “second-order” and “third-order” consciousness); see also 69600DTEL060 (13 page draft of chapter one marked “METHOD”).

<sup>66</sup> For details on that intervening period, see William Mathews, “A Biographical Perspective on Conversion and the Functional Specialties in Lonergan,” 16 *METHOD: the Journal of Lonergan Studies* (1998), 133-160.

<sup>67</sup> 70200DTE060, at 1; 70200DTE060, at 39 (“The New Context,” discarded draft pages, dated May 13, 1966, and May 15, 1966).

Context” was finished in January, 1967.<sup>68</sup> A nearly final version of what became chapter five on “functional specialization” was apparently completed by the end of April, 1967.<sup>69</sup>

By July 1968, at the latest, Lonergan had produced a recognizable version of what became chapter one in the published version.<sup>70</sup> The chapter on “interpretation” seems to have been written in the fall of 1968, while the chapter on “history” was complete enough to be read in what became its published form to an audience at the Thomas More Institute in February, 1969.<sup>71</sup> The chapter later published as “History and Historians” is complete by the July, 1969 Regis Institute, although at that point it is titled “From History to Dialectic.”<sup>72</sup> Interestingly, as of July 1969 “Dialectic” and “Foundations” were treated in the same chapter in the draft then in progress.<sup>73</sup> The treatment of dialectic is suggestive there, but sparse; it lacks the full specification of dialectic tasks or operations found on the published *Method*’s page 250.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> 58700DTEL060. See Mathews, “A Biographical Perspective,” at 152-53 for the dating of that draft using Lonergan’s correspondence. While the draft mentions the “normative, critical, and dialectical functions” of transcendental method, it does not spell out dialectic tasks or operations in any detail. The otherwise complete draft is missing 15 pages on the topic of “Human Nature and Human History”; but those 15 pages may be found at 69100DTE060; and they do not contain significant material on dialectic.

<sup>69</sup> Mathews, “A Biographical Perspective,” at 154.

<sup>70</sup> Compare *Method*, 125-143 with CW 22, 446-466. Beginning in July 1968, the progress in composition can be tracked in annual increments from the 1968 summer institute at Boston College (published now in *Collected Works* volume 22), through the 1969 summer institute at Regis College, the 1970 summer institute at Boston College, and the 1971 summer institute in Dublin.

<sup>71</sup> See TC 505 and TC 506. See also the reference to “January 26, 1969” in the “History” chapter in *Method*, 176.

<sup>72</sup> 52900DTE060 Regis 69 8A.

<sup>73</sup> 53100DTE060 Regis 69 9, at 1 (“While dialectic and foundations differ in phase, they have enough in common to be treated in the same chapter.”) That chapter’s subtitles were:

1. Dialectic
2. Dialectic as methodical strategy
3. A note on the will
4. Dialectic and religion.
5. Foundations: Religion and conversion
6. The threefold conversion
7. What is founded by foundations?
8. Conversions and breakdowns

<sup>74</sup> There is, however, an intimation or anticipation of the later listing. “So beyond critical history, we acknowledge another functional specialty, dialectic. Among its tasks was to make explicit the opposed views of historians, to classify them, relate them, order them, and if possible reduce them to their roots, and in particular to their philosophical, ethical, and religious roots.” 53100DTE060 Regis 69 9, at 24.

So far as I can tell, at least provisionally, Lonergan spent from August 1969 until April or May of 1970 working on the chapters on “Dialectic” and “Foundations,” that is to say, he worked on separating them out into their own individual chapters from a combined proto-chapter in July 1969.<sup>75</sup> By the June, 1970 Boston College Institute, the chapter on “Dialectic” had assumed its final published form,<sup>76</sup> as had the chapter on “Foundations,” albeit with some interesting variation.<sup>77</sup> He spent the fall of 1970 working on more than one draft of “Doctrines,” and he completed the final version of that chapter on the eve of his 66<sup>th</sup> birthday in December 1970.<sup>78</sup> The completion of “Systematics” appears to have followed quickly thereafter, perhaps in as little as six weeks.<sup>79</sup> “Communications” was completed after that, with the whole work largely ready for publication by March, 1971.<sup>80</sup>

### C. Significance of the Chronology

I give this compressed chronology for two reasons. First, the chronology shows that there was a gap of almost three years between the concise sketch of the functional specialty Dialectic in what later became chapter five on “Functional Specialties” and the later completed chapter on “Dialectic.” Just as the account of the functional specialty History in chapter five and the later account of that specialty in chapter eight differ considerably, so there are significant differences between the account of the functional

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<sup>75</sup> No doubt he was occupied with additional tasks such as occasional papers during that time period. But it is well to recall that during an eight-month period from December 1952 to early August 1953, Lonergan managed to write chapters 14 to 20 of *Insight*. See Frederick Crowe, *Lonergan* (Collegeville, MN, 1992), 71-72.

<sup>76</sup> 606BCDTE070 (“Dialectic”).

<sup>77</sup> 608BCDTE070 (“Foundations”).

<sup>78</sup> Letter from Lonergan to Maria Shradly, December 16, 1970 (Georgetown Special Collections).

<sup>79</sup> Letter from Lonergan to Maria Shradly, January 27, 1971 (Georgetown Special Collections)(indicating that he was in the “planning phase” of the last chapter of *Method*, and mentioning Rahner’s *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie*, referenced on the first page of the published version of “Communications”).

<sup>80</sup> Ivo Coelho, *Hermeneutics and Method: The ‘Universal Viewpoint’ in Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 308.

specialty dialectic in chapter five and the account of that specialty in chapter ten three years later.

There is no problem with the fact of the differences themselves. They result simply from the fact that, as Lonergan elsewhere put it, “An intelligent writer advances in insight as he writes,”<sup>81</sup> and Lonergan certainly qualifies as an intelligent writer. Moreover, “at times, his fresh insights will be so basic that he is forced to destroy what he has written and to begin afresh,”<sup>82</sup> and there are enough discarded pages, drafts, and sketches extant in the Lonergan archives to suggest that Lonergan was plagued with fresh insights as he struggled to compose various chapters of *Method*. So far as I know, though, these differences between the sketches in chapter five and the resulting later chapter-length treatment of the specialties have not received a great deal of scholarly attention. And given the current availability of a considerable amount of relevant archival material, I hope to sketch in a future paper the ascertainable stages in that three year process.

Secondly, though, and more to the immediate point, the chronology shows that Lonergan spent a disproportionate amount of time working on the chapter on Dialectic. In addition, the arc of developments leading from the initial discovery page to the finished chapter ten reveal a remarkable series of leaps, and many of them are repeatedly refined and honed down in the process to that remarkably lapidary and laconic page, 250.

#### **D. “Comparison” as a Technical Term**

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<sup>81</sup> *Insight*, 591; CW 3, at 613.

<sup>82</sup> *Insight*, 591; CW 3, at 613.

Let me give two examples. First, in the initial discovery pages Lonergan has “dialectical method” located within the functional specialty history, together with “genetic, comparative, and organistic” methods.

“History: sequence of ideas and doctrines  
comparative organistic genetic dialectical methods  
moves towards synthesis of interpretations  
dialectic sets fundamental alternatives of judgement”<sup>83</sup>

One may note initially that “comparison” in this context involves something resembling a precise method—on par with the genetic and dialectical methods worked out in detail in *Insight*—and not the premethodical or unguided practice of itemizing vague descriptive similarities.<sup>84</sup> Lonergan suggests as much in an interlinear comment on the paragraph that ends on the bottom of page 129 in *Method*. First, the sentence he is commenting on: “Comparing them [viz., these viewpoints] will bring to light just where differences are irreducible, where they are complementary and could be brought together within a larger whole, where finally they can be regarded as successive stages in a single process of development.”<sup>85</sup> Second, his impromptu or interlinear comment on that text in July 1968: “Comparison is to human studies what experiment is in the natural sciences; you can’t experiment on men; it’s setting up oppositions. Just as experiment reveals opposition between your hypothesis and the data, the comparative method compares different types of data with one another, and is confronted with differences there.”<sup>86</sup> Lonergan had something much more technical in mind than would appear from a less-intensive reading of the sentence concerning “comparison” on page 250. In short, just as experimental

<sup>83</sup> 47400DTE060, at 12 (bolding added).

<sup>84</sup> The function of “comparative study” in the treatment of genetic method in *Insight* bears further investigation in this context. *Insight*, 466, CW 3, at 491; *Insight*, 467, CW 3, at 491; *Insight*, 468, CW 3, at 493.

<sup>85</sup> *Method*, 129; CW 22, at 451 (1968 Boston College Institute).

<sup>86</sup> CW 22, at 451.

method seeks to reveal oppositions and anomalies between hypothesis and data, so comparison seeks anomalies and differences in aggregates and sequences of interpreters and historians.

Third, the technical meaning of “comparison” is intimated in Lonergan’s suggestion that “comparison” leads “to genetic and dialectical explanations of differences that occur.”<sup>87</sup> Or as he puts it in an earlier fragment, “So interpretation leads into history which compares and relates the interpreted data. The basic task is comparison. ... When authors agree, are their differences to be regarded as complementary aspects of a single organic whole? When they disagree, are they related to one another as successive stages of a single developing position? or are they contradictorily opposed? So comparison leads to determining organistic, genetic, and dialectical relationships.”<sup>88</sup>

So much for a first example; let me briefly suggest a second. It concerns the mystery of what happened to the original explicit assignment of a role within functional specialization for comparative, organistic, genetic, and dialectical methods. What happened to that idea? Read carefully, perhaps, that same sentence at the bottom of page 129 of *Method* suggests an answer: “Comparing them [viz., these viewpoints] will bring to light just where differences are irreducible, where they are complementary and could

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<sup>87</sup> 69700DTE060, at 14-15.

<sup>88</sup> 70900DTE060, at 21. It is interesting that, at this point, Lonergan regarded “comparison” as the distinctive task of the functional specialty history, not dialectic.

“research:	what did $x_i$ say
<u>interpretation:</u>	what did $x_i$ mean
<u>history:</u>	how does meaning of $x_i$ <b>compare</b> with meaning of $x_{i-1}, x_{i-2}, x_{i-3} \dots x_{i+1}, x_{i+2}, x_{i+3} \dots$ ”

53900DOE060, at 5 (emphasis added). Comparison here concerns genetic sequences of meaning.

be brought together within a larger whole, where finally they can be regarded as successive stages in a single process of development.”<sup>89</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

In this brief space I have been able only to begin to intimate the possibilities of a fresh reading of *Method*, 250. In a future paper I hope to document in much greater detail the kind of deeper reading made possible now by the availability of large amounts of relevant archival material. Surely Lonergan’s long road to “the great awakening” deserves to be less shrouded, and surely it deserves to be more fully understood and credited as the great revolutionary achievement he thought it to be.

“Who of us would not be glad to lift the veil behind which the future lies hidden; to cast a glance at the next advances of our science and at the secrets of its development during future centuries?”

David Hilbert<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> *Method*, 129; CW 22, at 451 (1968 Boston College Institute).

<sup>90</sup> David Hilbert, quoted in Clifford Pickover, *The Math Book* (New York: Sterling, 2009), 298.