

## SURF 8

### **Functional Collaboration and the Universal Viewpoint**

This essay is, hopefully, the first of series of collaborative efforts seeking clues to progress in understanding and applying chapter 17 of *Insight*. The key nudge comes from the footnote on page 153 of *Method in Theology*, where Lonergan crisply suggests a transposition of the universal viewpoint through the lift of functional specialization.<sup>1</sup>

There are two sections here. The first identifies the key clue-sentence in chapter 17 of *Insight* on the topic; the second begins collecting pointers to the meaning of the key phrase, *pure formulations*.

#### **1. Stirring Up Respect For Functionality**

Let me recall my function in these essays as researcher, a researcher in Lonergan studies. So, like a researcher in the new Hadron Accelerator output, I watch for tracks that are unattended to, suggestive, uninterpreted. My work, if you like, is watching for neglected tracks in the Theology Accelerator, Lonergan. He is, of course, much more than that - an integral cultural accelerator - but spelling that out adequately is very much beyond our cultural ball-park at present. And what I want to do is something altogether gentler.

The gentler venture is related to the forthcoming Halifax Conference, July 2009. In the previous essay, SURF 7, "Lonergan Research as a Functional Specialty", I wrote of finding suggestive stuff, neglected stuff, in the Lonergan *Opera Omnia*, and of finding such stuff in relation to the needs of our own present work, and indeed that sort of finding may well turn out to be the central focus of the meeting. That depends on our exchanges in the time before and at the meeting.

<sup>1</sup>"See my discussion of the truth of interpretation in *Insight*, and observe how ideas presented there recur here in quite different functional specialties. For instance, what there is termed a universal viewpoint, here is realized by advocating a distinct functional specialty named dialectic"(*Method in Theology*, the first foot note in the chapter on Interpretation).

First, let us take the mystic air out of the two words *Universal Viewpoint* - UV for short. I have been doing that in the past decade by comparing UV to the Standard Model that dominates particle physics at the moment. Even without knowing physics, that can be a help. What I am on about is the regular accepted viewpoint in any field of inquiry. Perhaps it is easier to think of the periodic table in chemistry after 1870? All graduate chemists - indeed all grade 12 chemists! - have some version of this "in their heads" as they do chemistry.

So, let us think of UV as an equivalent of the periodic table in chemistry: a standard perspective that one assumes is common to all those serious about theology. Well, let us narrow that to the Lonergan Group. Then we can say, whether the interest in Lonergan is a type of grade 12 interest, or a graduate interest, that a skimpy reading of the third part of chapter 17 of *Insight* leaves one with the impression that, yes, we all have a shared notion of a sort-of genetic line up of viewpoints. And we can even think of deviant viewpoints in relation to that sequencing.

An image I find useful is the image of the frog from seed to adult croaker. So, we can usefully concentrate on stages in the tadpole's development. The development is genetic: but the tadpole can have bad days e.g. when damp is in short supply. This gives us an inclusion of something parallel to dialectic deviation. But we have a start on a common perspective. What Lonergan does is to suggest a heuristics - and it is little more - of the push beyond that common perspective. The precise trouble is, of course, that it **is** little more: indeed, it is amusingly scant. What else could he give, granted the pressure on him in those few summer months of 1953, under orders to head for Rome? He never got back to the task of filling out the sketch, indeed I could say of filling out *The Sketch*, that really obscure page or so where "he says it all."<sup>2</sup> But did he not go on to give canons of hermeneutics? Well yes, but are they really that helpful, beyond *The Sketch*?

---

<sup>2</sup>Chapter nine of my Website book, *ChrISt in History*, follows a strategy that throws light on this claim. It is worth following up soonest.

So here I am, as researcher, noticing a track, a road not taken, in Lonergan studies. The road not taken is a serious study of *The Sketch*. Note 2, below, gives a reference to a previous effort of mine that deals with the Canons of hermeneutics and *The Sketch*: I shall not comment on it here, since that would give away my strategic trickery in that treatment. But, when you have given this a first read, a first brooding, you may find that chapter nine of *ChrISt in History* opens up freshly the meaning of the canons of hermeneutics to you. Here, however, we stay with a piece of *The Sketch* which strikes me as the right spot to begin our push to meet the demand articulated by Lonergan in the note on page 153 of *Method in Theology*: putting UV into the context of functional collaboration.

Let us start with the central clue to our challenge of lifting the canons of interpretation into the context of functional collaboration. What are pure formulations? “They are pure formulations if they proceed from an interpreter that grasps the universal viewpoint and if they are addressed to an audience that similarly grasps the universal viewpoint.”<sup>3</sup>

It is important that I do not hurry along here. Indeed, I could well end this SURF, this essay, with that four-lined fur-lined paragraph. This is the anomaly that I have detected in Lonergan’s *Insight* tracks, giving us - yes, a terrible multiple pun, referring eventually to the track round the eight specialties - the inside track on discovering Lonergan’s discovery of nearly twelve years later. The detected anomaly, in an efficiently operating functional collaborative community, is handed on, a subtle baton pass from researcher to interpreters. But we do not have that community, nor therefore is there a subtle effectiveness present in any of our exchanges: unless you are heuristically with me, in seeded hope, an audience that senses the grasp of and by the universal viewpoint, transformed by the tracking that is to be functional community.

---

<sup>3</sup>*Insight*, 580[602].

We must both, I think, get back to helpful analogies from science. Of course, I immediately think of the true stories about mathematicians in conversation. **A** say to **B**, as she jots down an added line to a list of symbolic exchangings, “you see, isn’t it exciting, this follows from ....” (“il est facile à voir”, ‘es folgt darauf’, ‘gnebuda frindesi ro’.... whatever). **B** is baffled, returns to his office to scribble on his blackboard and two hour later returns, “yes, its obvious”.

Or think of the physicist researcher rushing to her colleague with output from a cyclotron experiment, “this is it .... eureka!.... see.... ” To the colleague it may seem like finding an image of Jesus in a photo of clouds.

We are not in a hurry here? So, perhaps we can re-read (and do some equivalent of retiring to a blackboard of minding) an agitated paragraph of Lonergan to colleagues not in the ball-park of his view of reading:

“Acts of understanding result from empirical data illuminated by agent intellect; and the relevant data for the meaning of Aquinas are the written words of Aquinas. Inasmuch as one may suppose that one already possesses a habitual understanding similar to that of Aquinas, no method or effort is needed to understand as Aquinas understood; one has simply to read, and the proper acts of understanding and meaning will follow. Then one has to learn. Only by the slow, repetitious circular labor of going over and over the data, by catching here a little insight and there another, by following through false leads and profiting from many mistakes, but continuous adjustments and cumulative changes of one’s initial suppositions and perspective and concepts can one hope to attain such a development of one’s own understanding as to hope to understand what Aquinas understood and meant. Such is the method I have employed, and it has been on the chance that others also might wish to employ it that this book has been written.”<sup>4</sup>

I suspect that not too many of my readers will take two hours off to brood over

<sup>4</sup>*Verbum*, 222-23.

this: we have come a long way towards inhumanity in the axial period. Did that same inhumanity hold your neurodynamics hostage as you read my four-lined paragraph above, at note 3? Can you fight that inhumanity, that block to the patient “dynamic joy and zeal”<sup>5</sup> of the cosmos, by blossoming into “the slow repetitious, circular labor of going over and over the “ paragraph, in widening circles of relevant distractions? “Let us start with ....” But with what? Yes, with **what**: “empirical data illuminated by agent intellect.”<sup>6</sup> Are you alert, with a soccer player’s poise for a pass, a tennis player’s bent for a serve?

**Let us start with the central clue to our challenge of lifting the canons of interpretation into the context of functional collaboration. What are pure formulations? “They are pure formulations if they proceed from an interpreter that grasps the universal viewpoint and if they are addressed to an audience that similarly grasps the universal viewpoint.”<sup>7</sup>**

Before I get into some detailed pointers about this paragraph and its reading let me invite you to listen, *audiens*, to Lonergan typing this sentence in the summer of 1953. He has the problem of cosmopolis in his hands, and it bubbles out in this crazy demand that he associates with pure formulations. Was he smiling? Certainly he was finger-flying high, luminous about the lurking problem. The lurking problem is no longer *The Problem* with which he started section three of chapter 17.<sup>8</sup> He is now flying, a knight

<sup>5</sup>“Good will wills the order of the universe, and so it wills with that order’s dynamic joy and zeal” (*Insight*, 722).

<sup>6</sup>*Verbum*, 222.

<sup>7</sup>Bold type-faced is used here not merely for emphasis but also as a strategy introduced in the later website *Field Nocturnes*. It is a boldfaced strategy that nudges the reader to attend to the innerness of the seen print, not already out there, but within the poise of the psychic skin of neurodynamic wonder. It disturbs as it does **here-now** perhaps, the regular naive illusionary reading of the print as plainly on the out-there page. See, further, note 10 below.

<sup>8</sup>Section 3.1, coming immediately and without preamble after the full section-title, “**The Truth of Interpretation**”, has that simple title, *The Problem*.

flight, towards The Dark Tower.<sup>9</sup> Jack and Jill<sup>10</sup> address each other in a common cosmopolitan world, biography to biography in pilgrim care of history and everlasting living. He thinks of them as sharing his world. Who are they, who are they to be? By the end of the book he would write of them as “a new and higher collaboration of intellects through faith in God, and also a mystery that is at once symbol of the uncomprehended and sign of what is grasped and psychic force that sweeps living human bodies, linked together in charity, to the joyful, courageous, wholehearted, yet intelligently controlled performance of the tasks set by a world order in which the problem of evil is not suppressed but transcended.”<sup>11</sup>

Yet still he has to figure out what region of global humanity could be such an audience, each an *audiens* and a *self-audiens* of all, “cos-mi-c-all”.<sup>12</sup> Six years later he revives, relives, the problem of the first section of Chapter 17 of *Insight* as “the problem

<sup>9</sup>The reference is to Robert Browning, “Child Roland to the Dark Tower Came” (1855). It is a topic in *Cantower 4*, “Molecules of Description and Explanation”, which is primarily on feminism role on rescuing meaning.

<sup>10</sup>The reference is to the Jack and Jill of Lonergan’s “Cognitional Structure”, where “Jack or Jill is invited to raise a hand and to look at it” (*Collection*, chapter 14, 215), where now they are boldfaced (see note 7 above) in facing each other, **poised** in their care (see *Cantower 8*, “Position, Poisiton, Protopossession”), where it is no longer true that each face is out there to be seen by the eye.. It is no longer true that “the hand is really out there: it is an object. The eye, strangely is not the hand; it is some distance away in the head; it is the subject. The eye really sees the hand; it sees what is there to be seen; it does not see what is not there to be seen. This is objectivity.” (*Collection*, 215). This challenge to naive objectivity is to be the normative psychic state in the **audiens** and **videns** of The Dark Tower of Able in later stages of meaning. It is quite remote from present existential Lonerganism.

<sup>11</sup>*Insight*, 744. I regularly note that this ten-page eulogy contains the word *collaboration* 29 times.

<sup>12</sup>The reference here is to the end of chapter 2 of my *Lack in the Beingstalk* (Axial Publishing, 2007), which places the challenge to become an adequate **audiens**, audience, in the context of a dynamics of adult growth. Chapter 3 adds the context of the reach beyond *haute vulgarization*.

of general history, which is the real catch.”<sup>13</sup> And only 5 years after that does he find - rather, define - Jack and Jill and companions to be, what else, functional collaborators in bringing the best of the past into an effective street-wisdom. The region of history is to be a Tower of Able, “symbol of the uncomprehended and sign of what is grasped and psychic force”. Why did it take him so long to lift the eight fragments of theology, or of any discipline, into a neuromolecular linked controlled performance of history’s task, named by him ten years before its discovery as, “in Vico’s phrase, a *scienza nuova*.<sup>14</sup>

Our question is, however, why has it taken us so long to read his signs, his marks?

So, I venture here in scattered research to surround this single paragraph-track with pointers to his searchings in the 1950s. His Standard Model of 1965 invites us to glimpse that context and to transpose it from his lonely Everest climb to a communal undergraduate climb of later times.<sup>15</sup> “But one may not be ready,”<sup>16</sup> and the **one** can be a whole network of fragmented yet unified global cultures made massively unready. It, and the muddled cultures of these next generations, are to be made ready “only by the slow, repetitious, circular labor of going over and over the data,”<sup>17</sup> but now the circle is imaged by a globe-embracing Hadron Collider of searchings, opinions, hopes, terrors, no longer scattered but “a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations

<sup>13</sup> *Topics in Education*, 236.

<sup>14</sup> The conclusion to a review of M.F.Sciacca, *Saint Augustin et le neoplatonisme, La possibillitie d'une philosophie chritienne* and Maurice Nedoncelle, *Existe-t-il une philosophie chritienne?*”, published in *Gregorianum* 40(1959), 182-83; reprinted in *Shorter Papers. Collected Works* volume 20, University of Toronto Press, 2007, 223.

<sup>15</sup> On this transposition see Surf 12.

<sup>16</sup> From the quotation above at note 4.

<sup>17</sup> From the quotation above at note 4.

yielding cumulative and progressive results.”<sup>18</sup>

## 2. Showing Uplifting Research Findings

So, I invite you to SURF our paragraph. For me SURF has the meaning of the title to this section. Think of it in terms of the Hadron Accelerator researcher excitedly sharing a seeding insight with colleagues about a track just noticed, a dog that did not bark in the night. So, I cast about, we cast about together. I have already been doing such casting about: making odd connections with other tracks in Lonergan’s *Collected Works* that need to be **Connected Works**.

Yet you may have noticed that I have so cast about that you are still without clue as to “what are pure formulations?”. Have I whetted your appetite? Here, I must return to the core problem, the problem of the word *Fancy*. What is your appetite whetted for? “It is, I fear, in Vico’s phrases, a *scienza nuova*.”

The pause over the challenge of writing an invitation to that new science led me, a month later than this essay, to my concluding SURF. But here let us pause, as I paused then, over that world *fancy*.

The word fancy, or fantasize, asks for an effort of historical imagination that would seed and breed in you a fullsome analogy of science. This, I fear, is an effort that has not been acknowledged nor made. Indeed, a distinguished Lonergan scholar remarked in 2008 that there was a massive richness in commonsense description that can carry us forward sufficiently. Such a scholar has “no real apprehension of the nature of the changes”<sup>19</sup> involved in moving into the world of explanation. He - for it was a male speaking - is satisfied and settled in the world of “Augustine, Descartes, Pascal, Newman, with their commonsense contributions to our self-knowledge”. He can layer in the richness of 20<sup>th</sup> century phenomenology and 21<sup>st</sup> century post-modernism. And

<sup>18</sup> *Method in Theology*, 4.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 317.

so, in a sophisticated mythome of *haute vulgarization*, he remains unwittingly “lost in some no man’s land between the world of theory and the world of common sense.”<sup>20</sup>

We have mused already over the horror of the many patterns of this horseflesh flight from understanding as its hooves trample haughtily the corridors of academe and the streets of humble hope. But, the horse-men say, we are rich in sentiment and dreams. “The vast forces of human benevolence can no longer vew left to tumble down the Niagara of fine sentiments and noble dreams. They have to be assigned a function,”<sup>21</sup> and the function of a community’s dreams and sentiments is “to lift its eyes to the more general and the more difficult fields of speculation.”<sup>22</sup> Perhaps this is a dead horse by now, a whole row of dead horses, and “I do not think there is any need to flog a whole row of dead horses: but a flick at a particularly nauseating one is enough”, especially as it is not dead but brutally alive. It is the arrogance of refusing the lesson of the invisible that the most elementary science, physics, offers us. Nor is popular physics, without mathematics, enough. Such physics “give an illusion of knowledge, a false idea of what the science is. And it clutters the mind.”<sup>23</sup>

“Before man can contemplate his own nature in precise but highly difficult concepts, he has to bring the virtualities of that nature into the light of day.”<sup>24</sup> One does so by respecting Descartes, “convinced that too many people felt it beneath them to direct their efforts to apparently trifling problems.”<sup>25</sup> “Modern science has made it possible to distinguish very sharply between preliminary description and scientific

<sup>20</sup>Lonergan, “Time and Meaning”, *Collected Works*, vol. 6, 121. See also there 155.

<sup>21</sup>*For A New Political Economy*, 36.

<sup>22</sup>*For A New Political Economy*, 20.

<sup>23</sup>*Topics in Education*, 145.

<sup>24</sup>*Insight*, 558.

<sup>25</sup>I quote the first paragraph of chapter 1 of *Insight*.

explanation,”<sup>26</sup> but the distinction has to emerge in your mind if you are to be sharp about the redemption of humanity.

“Doctrines that are embarrassing will not be mentioned in polite company,”<sup>27</sup> and I will, no doubt, mention this doctrine again in my few remaining years. But it is a doctrine precisely conceived by Lonergan especially through his efforts in physics. It was a doctrine that he presented wryly in the first lecture I ever heard from him, in Easter 1961 at University College Dublin, when he talked of the common sense’s deluded hope of understanding relativity without the equations.<sup>28</sup> It is a methodological doctrine that is quite radically beyond common sense. Either you have battled your way into some serious elementary physics or you are just not in Lonergan’s ballpark at all.<sup>29</sup>

How then are you to answer for yourself the question, What are pure formulations?. I had intended originally to turn to samples of such formulations from Lonergan’s work in theology in the decade prior to his discovery of functionality. But it seems best to stay here with the most elementary samples of such formulations. The oddity of that stay is its embarrassment. Pure formulations that are doctrinal would seem grist for our comfortable theological mill. But what say you to such simple samples as  $d^2s/dt^2$  or Maxwell’s differential equations? “If you know what is meant by these symbols from the differential calculus, you know exactly what is meant” within the best of the present audience of the simplest science. Have you found, then, an answer to the question “What are pure formulations?”? Alas, no: you have found samples of data for the understanding that would get you to the answer. You may have

<sup>26</sup>The conclusion of chapter 15 of *Insight*.

<sup>27</sup>*Method in Theology*, 299.

<sup>28</sup>This first of six lectures was not recorded. The other five are available in the Toronto Lonergan centre.

<sup>29</sup>It chapter 1 of the Website book, *The Redress of Poise*, I recommend tackling Lonergan’s economics as a way into the theoretical mentality.

done the physics; but there is the need for metaphysics.<sup>30</sup> Nor is it sufficient to have the simple metaphysics of chapters 15 and 16 of *Insight*. Such a metaphysics certainly allows you to swing through and past the muddy muddled interpretations of acceleration and of light-speed that haunt contemporary physics. But a larger control of meaning is needed “to speak effectively to undifferentiated consciousness.”<sup>31</sup> The muddied interpretations are tadpole twists on the road to the frog’s breast stroke. To control them is to tell a story of linkages, however warped. To control them in an identification<sup>32</sup> relating to the effective turn to the future is to go further towards a genetic alignment that would so untwist the line as to “make the past something better than was the reality,”<sup>33</sup> and breed a pedagogy of progress, where adequate hypothetical expressions ferment forth ecstatically.

<sup>30</sup>The need is quite general, as the statement of generalized empirical method on the top of page 141 of *A Third Collection* would have it.

<sup>31</sup>*Method in Theology*, 99.

<sup>32</sup>The identification needs adequate symbolization, e.g. the series of Metawords  $W_i$ , or the symbols  $UV + GS + FS_i$ . See Lonergan, *The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, 151.

<sup>33</sup>*Method in Theology*, 251.