

Situations of Generous Engineering

On April 11th 2019 I was cheered by a definite, precise response to my push of [Æcornomics 12](#). Catherine King wrote, after an exchange in which I shared the papers of *Divyadaan* 30/1 (2019), *Religious Faith Seeding the Positive Anthropocene Age*:

Before I read his papers, I want to relate that my first response to the use of the term “engineering” was a negative one, as in what we think of as “social engineering” orchestrated from some false high-tower of hidden and unquestioned control, God forbid, some “smart” and well-meaning techie-group, who are really double-speaking themselves towards a Jabba-like totalitarianism.

My guess is that, that definition, such as it is, is not at all what Phil is talking about when using that term, and especially not what, according to my own reading of him, Lonergan was about. I think it's more like a writ-large “complex” situation that, with appropriate transitions, is the group and national/world equivalent of authentic subjectivity and the implied self-mastery (per Aristotle) that, those who can and who are called to do so, would ensconce in the doctrines and general systems that lend order to concrete human development, leadership, and ultimately, freedom.

Surely others can climb, like Catherine, out of a negative response to my suggestion, to glimpse, yes, what “lurks behind the scenes”¹ of my *Æcornomics* series: “a writ-large ‘complex’ situation.” The reading of those papers is one great step, and I would add, but without a hastening, the challenge of eventually climbing seriously into and beyond my essay “Method in Theology: From $[1 + 1/n]^{nx}$ to $\{M (W_3)^{\theta\Phi T}\}^4$ ” in [Journal of Macrodynamic Analysis](#) (vol. 10, 2018). Might you share Catherine’s suspicion, and push on to see that what lurks behind the scene “reveals itself only in the exactitude with which each minor increment to our knowing is effected.”² Take that end-symbol of my 2018 essay title: $\{M (W_3)^{\theta\Phi T}\}^4$. It is way worse than telling Newton that the effective meaning of electricity is caught in a complex geohistorical heuristic enlargement of Maxwell’s equations.

Let me pause over Catherine’s words “a writ-large ‘complex’ situation.” My single ‘word’ $\{M (W_3)^{\theta\Phi T}\}^4$ has to be written out into volumes that would guide the tower-group of generous engineers towards a massive ten-layered topology of situations that ‘lurk behind the scenes,’ the seen single symbol.

And now, rather than going on I would appeal to you: Let you pause over Catherine’s words, “a writ-large ‘complex’ situation.” Can you reach some decent glimpse of this situation of situations, myriads of interlocked situation rooms, as the situation that is to be a slow-growing Tower Community reaching out to every corner of future history, which would ferment forward

¹ *Insight*, 303: the end of chapter 9.

² *Ibid.*

into—I quote Catherine’s conclusion—“the doctrines and general systems that lend order to concrete human development, leadership, and ultimately, freedom”?³

The immediate problem is beginning the climbing of those ten steps of engineering diagram, placed here on the next page, in a weave of effective topologies. Might we, thus beginning, get some chat going about the commonsense ethos that is to dominate gently all the lonely micro-autonomies of large and small situations of the future?⁴

But the chat must start with some empirical effort on your part. You can try various approaches. Just take a map of the world—or a globe—and stretch your imagination to envisage, e.g., Gandhi’s 10,000 villages. Go Google ‘villages of the world’ and you’ll find, e. g., talk of the 25 or 12 most beautiful villages of this continent and that country. This has to slowly be weaved into your heuristic grip. Slowly? This is a science of situations in the within and the without of villages: recall my talk of the nun’s story and the None’s story?⁵ The None’s story has dominated Lonergan studies since the mid-20th century: a wasteland of enriched initial meanings that remain ineffective. Should I go on? I think: not here. But a big clue is thinking out slowly the meaning of $(W_3)^{\Theta\Phi T}$. Θ and Φ being latitude and longitude, and if you are thinking of “globe” then T is time coming out from the centre giving you layers of history’s world maps. Thus you get a beginning of a geohistorical grip of a generous genetic control of meaning to be weaved forward from my central symbol W_3 .

³ They are to reach out to slowly screw-up present idiot “situation rooms” like that of Wolf Blitzer. Think of the rooms of parliaments, banks, town councils, NATO, Chinese talking heads at the Annual Chinese Congress in its mighty sick room.

⁴ The diagram has appeared in various places since I first concocted it in 1989 and located it in chapter 4 of *Process: Introducing Themselves to Young (Christian) Minders* (1990). It occurred recently on page 189 of *The Allure of the Compelling Genius of History* (Vancouver: Axial Publishing, 2015). No need, then, to add the footnotes here. But I cannot resist adding a reference to one of my own earlier shots at envisaging the future. It is a lecture given in Mexico in 2011 titled “Arriving in Cosmopolis”. There I envisaged the distribution of world population, in 9011 A.D., over Tower Tasks. The essay is available, in English and Spanish, as [Website Articles](#) 3 and 4.

⁵ See [Vignette 20](#), “The None’s Story.”

