

Functional Collaboration As The Implementation Of Lonergan's Method, Part 1: For What Problem is Functional Collaboration the Solution?

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This essay was a response to a request from Father Coelho, a scholar and educator in India, to write about how Lonergan's method might be applied.¹ I am pleased with the request though admit to suffering from some mental vertigo thinking about how I might do justice to the challenge.

I will begin with what I hope is a helpful clarification and three preliminary points. First, the clarification. There are various procedures associated with Lonergan's method, for example, real analysis,² cognitional process, generalized empirical method, transcendental method, dialectical method, critical method³ and functional specialization. All are relevant to the topic at hand and all are related to

¹ This essay was originally published in print in *Divyadaan: Indian Journal of Philosophy and Education*, vol. 24, No. 1 (2013), 1–34. I would like to thank Ivo Coelho, the editor of that journal for permission to re-publish the essay here (with minor changes). I would also like to thank Dr. James Duffy of *Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey and Universidad Nova Spania*, Mexico for his helpful comments on this paper

² Lonergan refers to real analysis as the method proper to the philosophy of history in "The Analytic Concept of History," *METHOD: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 11/1 (1993), 1–36. Real analysis provided the method for Lonergan's work in economics. See Philip McShane, "Editor's Introduction," in Bernard Lonergan, *For a New Political Economy*, ed. Philip J. McShane, vol. 21, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998) (hereafter *CWL* 21). Real analysis is the prototype of generalized empirical method. I discuss 'real analysis' at some length in chapter 3 of Michael Shute, *Lonergan's Discovery of the Science of Economics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010) (hereafter *LDSE*).

³ In *Insight*, Lonergan writes: "What, then, is critical method? It is method with respect to the ultimate, method applied to the most basic issues." Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, ed. Frederick Crowe and Robert Doran, vol. 3, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 708 (hereafter *CWL* 3).

each other. If we consider the entire course of Lonergan's development, I think it correct to say that the search for a general method that could organize all particular and special methods was a core concern. Lonergan's account of human cognitional process and his exhortation to theologians to appropriate and make explicit that process is key. It was, however, the discovery of functional specialization that provided the requisite overarching methodology structure for doing theology. So, in what follows, what I have in mind when I speak of the application or implementation of 'Lonergan's method' is primarily the method of functional specialization.⁴

To the first point, functional specialization is the solution to a fundamental problem in theological method. The effort toward that solution occupied Lonergan for well over thirty years.⁵ It is important to notice that while Lonergan's stated intention was to provide a method for theology, as astute theologians like Karl Rahner recognized, the method is relevant to all fields of inquiry, not just theology. Rahner writes: "Lonergan's theological methodology seems to me so general that it applies equally to all sciences, and so is not a method of theology as such but a general method of science illustrated by examples from theology."⁶ Lonergan affirmed this broader reach when he wrote of an

⁴ Lonergan clearly establishes the integral link between cognitional process and functional specialization in *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972) (hereafter *Method in Theology*), see especially chapters 1 and 5.

⁵ I sketch the early history of this effort in "'Let Us Be Practical' – The Beginnings of the Long Process to Functional Specialization in the 'Essay in Fundamental Sociology,'" in *Meaning and History in Systematic Theology: Essays in Honor of Robert M. Doran, S.J.*, ed. John Dadosky (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2009). See also, chapter 8 of *LDSE*. Lonergan himself confirms his own long-term focus on method. In a letter to M. Lemieux, Lonergan writes: "Again, *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*. But in 1952 I was told I would be teaching at the Gregorian from 1953 on, and that prompted me to publish *Insight* as a separate work." Letter to M. Lemieux, December 31, 1976, page 2. Lonergan's interest in methodology as such goes back to his time at Heythrop College in the late 1920s. In *Caring about Meaning*, we find the following from Lonergan: "I was very much attracted by one of the degrees in the [University of] London syllabus: Methodology. I felt there was absolutely no method to the philosophy I had been taught; it wasn't going anywhere. I was interested in method." *Caring about Meaning: Patterns in the Life of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Pierrot Lambert, Charlotte Tansey and Cathleen Going (Montreal: Thomas More Institute, 1982), 10.

⁶ "Die theologische Methodologie Lonergan's scheint mir so generisch zu sein, daß sie eigentlich auf jede Wissenschaft paßt, also keine Methodologie

‘integrated studies’ in which “the possibility of each integration is a method that runs parallel to the method in theology.”⁷ Picking up on this broader reach, Lonergan scholars have subsequently linked functional specialization to a variety of fields.⁸ This generalized application for functional specialization tells us that the core problem Lonergan tackled is as general as the solution he hit upon. And while Lonergan was clear that theological methodology was not theology, adopting functional specialization methodology or functional collaboration should produce a much richer understanding of the character of theology in its relationship to all branches of the natural and human sciences and scholarship. Eventually, I believe, widespread adoption of functional specialization should restore the integrative role of the science of theology.

To the second point. Recognition of the significance for Lonergan of his discovery of functional specialization leads to a shift in our understanding of the development of Lonergan’s thought. I have slowly come around to the position that Lonergan’s work in cognitional theory, though absolutely essential to his discovery of functional specialization, and to understanding Lonergan, was not an innovation of the same order as his discovery of functional specialization, to which I would add his

der Theologie als solcher ist, sondern nur eine allgemeinste Methodologie von Wissenschaft überhaupt, mit Beispielen aus der Theologie illustriert.” Karl Rahner, “Kritische Bemerkungen zu B.J.F. Lonergan’s Aufsatz: ‘Functional Specialties in Theology,’” *Gregorianum* 51 (1970), 537.

⁷ *Method in Theology*, 364.

⁸ Philip McShane has explored the implications of functional specialization in physics in “Elevating *Insight*: Spacetime as Paradigm Problem,” *METHOD: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 19/2 (2001); in economics in *Economics for Everyone* (Halifax: Axial Press, 1998) and *PastKeynes PastModern Economics: A Fresh Pragmatism* (Halifax: Axial Press, 2002), chapter 3; in linguistics in *A Brief History of Tongue* (Halifax: Axial Press, 1998); in musicology in *The Shaping of the Foundations* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1976), chapter 2, available online at www.philipmcschane.ca; and in literature in *Lonergan’s Challenge to the University and the Economy* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1980), chapter 5, available online at www.philipmcschane.ca. Bruce Anderson in *Discovery in Legal Decision-Making* (London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996), discusses functional specialization as applied in philosophy of law. Terrance Quinn discusses functional specialization in mathematics in “Reflection on Progress in Mathematics,” *Journal of Macrodynamical Analysis* 3 (2003) 97–116. Ian Brodie has applied functional specialization to religious studies in “Bernard Lonergan’s Method and Religious Studies: Functional Specialties and the Academic Study of Religion,” M.A. thesis, Memorial University, 2001. More recently there is Scott Halse, *Functional Specialization and Religious Diversity: Bernard Lonergan’s Methodology and the Philosophy of Religion*, Ph.D. thesis, McGill University, 2008. Most recently, a functional specialist approach has been applied to the practical issue of housing. See Sean McNelis, *Making Progress in Housing: A Framework for Collaborative Research* (Oxon: Routledge, 2014).

discovery of the basic variables for economic science. His cognitional theory and the related account of deliberation were masterful rediscoveries of the work of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, though it took Lonergan a while to fully appreciate those prior achievements.⁹ This claim does not take away from his considerable contributions to systematic theology, contributions which Frederick Crowe, Philip McShane, Charles Hefling, Robert Doran and others have documented over the past thirty years.¹⁰ However, Lonergan's efforts to teach theology in Montreal, Toronto and Rome also contributed immeasurably to his appreciation of the need to transform theological method. In a Thomas More interview from 1980, he says: "I taught theology for twenty-five years under circumstances that I consider absurd. And the reason why they were absurd was for lack of a method, or because of the

⁹ Initially, Lonergan was critical of Thomas Aquinas, or rather the version of Thomism he was taught at Heythrop in the late 1920s. Slowly, he came to appreciate what he later acknowledges to be the genius of Aquinas. In the 1930s, he draws on Aquinas' account of intellect and will in developing his notion of the dialectic of history. His dissertation on Thomas' notion of operative grace, completed in 1940, convinced him. In his study on *verbum* in Aquinas he uncovers the implicit foundations of that genius. Commenting on the received narrative of his development in 1967, Lonergan remarked: "I just add, however, that my interest in Aquinas came late." "Theories of Inquiry," *A Second Collection*, ed. William Ryan, S.J., Bernard Tyrrell, S.J. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), 38. For a discussion of the link between Lonergan's developing viewpoint on deliberation and the discovery of functional specialization see Michael Shute and Patrick Brown, "Editors' Introduction," *Journal of Macrodynamic Analysis* 7 (2012), 1–5.

¹⁰ Philip McShane notes the scholarly importance of Lonergan's Latin theology in "Implementation: The Ongoing Crisis of Method," *Journal of Macrodynamic Analysis* 3 (2003), 11–32, see especially pages 27–28. Pierre Lambert and Philip McShane point to a remarkable series of Lonergan's innovations in *Bernard Lonergan: His Life and Leading Ideas* (Vancouver: Axial Publishing, 2010); Frederick E. Crowe, S.J., documents Lonergan's Christological achievement in *Christ and History: The Christology of Bernard Lonergan from 1935 to 1982* (Ottawa: Novalis, 2005). Charles C. Hefling has written on a number of Lonergan's theological theses. See for example, "On Reading *The Way to Nicea*," *Religion and Culture: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lonergan*, S.J., ed. Timothy P. Fallon and Philip Boo Riley (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 149–166; "A Perhaps Permanently Valid Achievement: Lonergan on Christ's Satisfaction," *METHOD: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 10/1 (1992), 51–76; and "Redemption and Intellectual Conversion: Notes on Lonergan's 'Christology Today,'" *Lonergan Workshop* 5 (1985), 219–261. Robert Doran has explored the implication of Lonergan developments in Trinitarian theology and the theology of grace. On grace, see, for example, "'Complacency and Concern' and a Basic Thesis on Grace," *Lonergan Workshop* 13 (1997), 57–78; "Consciousness and Grace," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 11/1 (1993), 51–75; and *The Trinity in History: A Theology of the Divine Missions*, vol 1: *Missions and Processions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

survival of a method that should have been buried two hundred years ago.”¹¹ Likewise, while the research that went into his two studies of Aquinas provided a detailed understanding and appreciation of the implicit cognitional position that informed Aquinas’s work, instrumental to the achievement of his masterpiece *Insight*, it also provided him with a deep appreciation of the difficulties of doing together what he later explicitly differentiated as the distinct specialties of research, interpretation, history, and dialectic.¹² I will touch on the importance of functional specialization as a division of academic labour later in the essay. However, to drive home my present point, functional specialization and macroeconomic dynamics are, in my judgment, Lonergan’s truly original achievements and, I would add, both have roots in practical concerns.¹³ In the case of economics, it was concern over the devastating effects of the Great Depression that led Lonergan to the discovery of the foundations of that science. In the case of functional specialization, it was a concern about effectively implementing the Christian Idea in history to meet what he names the “longer cycle of decline”¹⁴ that led him to discover the general method for integrating all particular methods. If we investigate Lonergan’s work closely we find that these two discoveries are linked, for Lonergan’s discovery of the

¹¹ From an interview in *Curiosity at the Center of One’s Life: Statements and Questions of R. Eric O’Connor*, ed. J. Martin O’Hara (Montreal: Thomas More Institute, 1984), 408, quoted in Crowe, *Christ and History*, 91. Crowe points out that Lonergan’s rejection of the scholastic teaching model was typically nuanced and in the critical spirit of Leo XIII’s program *vertera novis augere et perficere*. Crowe writes: “There is an important caveat to be entered before we leave this chapter: with all his critiques of Scholasticism, Lonergan never lost his respect for that phase of Catholic thought.” *Ibid.*, 93.

¹² Lonergan writes: “One of the advantages of the notion of functional specialty is precisely this possibility of separate treatment of issues that otherwise becomes enormously complex. See for example, such monumental works as Emilio Betti’s *Teoria generale della interpretazione*, Milano: Giuffrè, 1955, and Hans-Georg Gadamer’s *Wahreit und Methode*, Tübingen: Mohr, 1960. Or see my own discussion of the truth of an interpretation in *Insight*, pp. 562–594, 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*, 153, n.1.

¹³ Frederick Crowe and Philip McShane have both pointed to the practical intentions motivating Lonergan’s massive life-long effort in methodology. See Frederick E. Crowe, “Bernard Lonergan as Pastoral Theologian,” *Gregorianum* 67 (1986), 451–470, reprinted in Frederick E. Crowe, S.J., *Appropriating the Lonergan Idea*, ed. Michael Vertin (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007) and Philip McShane, *Pastkeynes Pastmodern Economics*, especially chapter 3, “Inventing Pragmatics.”

¹⁴ *CWL* 3, 226–228.

basic variables for economics was prepared by a prior methodological discovery.¹⁵

Finally, a third preliminary point and a plea. Lonergan first presented his method of functional specialization in an essay in *Gregorianum* in 1969, yet functional specialization is largely unknown beyond the confines of Lonergan students.¹⁶ For this reason Hugo Meynell entreats us to figure out “how to make [Lonergan’s] work, and its immensely important implications ... available for the general intellectual community (as opposed to a small and embattled segment of the learned Catholic ghetto).”¹⁷ I note, then, with some despair, then, that in 2012 we marked the fortieth anniversary of the publication of *Method in Theology*, and functional specialization does not yet occupy the heart of the Lonergan enterprise. What I mean by this is that, while there is on occasion mention of the eight specialties, there has been little sustained effort to actually proceed in a functionally specialized manner. When I was a student of Frederick Crowe’s in the early 1980s he would remind me that I should be able to answer the question: what specialty am I working in? Asking and asking that question is a minimal requirement and it is yet not common practice in Lonergan studies. In fact, the larger issue is not simply being able to identify your specialty. Functional specialization is foremost a method of collaboration, and it requires the development of an ethos in which different functional specialists can effectively cooperate in the solution of complex problems. An effective workable collaborative practice using functional specialist methods has yet to emerge among his disciples.¹⁸ I suspect this lack of progress is one of Father Coelho’s concerns.

¹⁵ This is my argument in *LDSE*, see especially chapters 2–4.

¹⁶ Bernard Lonergan, “Functional Specialties in Theology,” *Gregorianum* 50 (1969), 485–504.

¹⁷ Hugo Meynell, “The Plight and the Prospects of Lonergan Studies: A Personal View,” *Journal of Macrodynamic Analysis* 3 (2003), 167.

¹⁸ There have been a number of attempts to begin functional collaboration. The first published collaboration was *Papal Infallibility: An Application of Lonergan’s Theological Method*, ed. Terry J. Tekippe (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1983). I started the occasional *Journal of Macrodynamic Analysis* at www.mun.ca/jmda in 2001 as a vehicle for functional collaborative efforts. There have been to date seven volumes in this series. Volume 3 was a *Festschrift* in honour of Philip McShane, and his lead article “Implementation: The Ongoing Crisis of Method,” *Journal of Macrodynamic Analysis* 3 (August 2003) 11–32, directly concerned the issues of implementation of functional specialization. Volume 4 was devoted in total to the functional specialty of Interpretation. In 2010–11, the SGEME web site <http://www.sgeme.org> seminar worked on the first five specialties. The seminar on Research will be published as volume 9 of the *Journal of Macrodynamic Analysis* in 2015. There are plans to publish some of the work from the SGEME seminar in future issues of the journal devoted to individual specialties.

Father Coelho also voiced a second, more specific request that I ‘work out a clearer and more linear picture of how [Philip McShane] sees the method being applied.’¹⁹ Certainly, the implementation of functional specialization, or functional collaboration, is a central concern for McShane, and his persistence in making this point over the past thirty years has, I expect, annoyed some faithful Lonerganians. My first cautionary thought, however, is to recall McShane’s own advice about the dangers of summary statements: “Too many people seem willing to attempt for Lonergan what Fichte attempted for Kant, or what De Quincey attempted for Ricardo.”²⁰ I do not wish, then, to soft-pedal the difficulties and challenge of functional collaboration, nor sell short the full meaning of Lonergan’s achievement, points Philip McShane has stressed repeatedly in writing and lecturing since 1970. Nor do I claim to provide anything like an adequate interpretation of McShane’s communications on Lonergan’s method or his initiatives toward implementing functional collaboration. His output is vast and impressive.²¹ I can, however, offer my own understanding and appreciation of the challenge, and suggest some strategies for going forward that I hope are in accord with McShane’s efforts and will help to communicate his intentions. It is useful to keep in mind that Lonergan has provided the general features of a method of methods. The special methods relevant to each specialty, to each scientific genera, to communications among specialties and among all types of collaborative research will only be worked out gradually in the concrete practice of collaborators. Whatever specific normative practices emerge will reflect the self-corrective, cumulative, and progressive successes of future practitioners. It is important, then, that we recognize the place and pace of progress in history and the real blocks that stand in the way. Effective

¹⁹ Quoted from an email correspondence from Father Ivo Coelho to the author, August 2011.

²⁰ Quoted from Philip McShane, “Imagine All the People, *Field Nocturnes CanTower 48*,” page 16, available at <http://www.philipmcshane.ca>. See Fichte’s “Sun-clear Statement to the Public at large. An attempt to force the reader to an understanding” was published, in the English translation of A.E. Kroger, in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 2 (1868) and Thomas De Quincey “Dialogue of Three Templars on Political Economy, Chiefly in Relation to the Principles of Mr. Ricardo,” *The Works of Thomas de Quincey*, ed. Adam and Charles Black (Edinburgh, 1862), 4, 176–257. Dr. McShane had been making this point since at least the 1980s. I first came across it in “Middle Kingdom, Middle Man: *T’ien-hsia i jen*,” in *Searching for Cultural Foundations*, ed. Philip McShane (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), 1–43.

²¹ The promotion of functional collaboration has been the major theme of McShane’s published life since 1969. A bibliography of his effort would be lengthy. Readers may want to go to his website, www.philipmcshane.org. McShane has also been the major force in bringing Lonergan’s economics to public attention.

functional collaboration is a key to the shift to the ‘hoped-for third stage of meaning,’ a phrase as opaque as it is revealing. For we are still at the beginning stages of this venture, stuck in the troubled consciousness²² of our time. I take comfort, then, in the words of G.K. Chesterton that “if a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing badly.”²³ Or to cite McShane himself: “If one takes Lonergan’s methodological doctrine, as described in *Method in Theology*, seriously, then one has to attempt some contribution to its implementation. Initially, such contributions are bound to be shabby.”²⁴

So we need to start somewhere. It may be helpful, then, to get some grasp on the problem for which functional specialization is the solution. This will be the subject matter of the first part of this essay, which appears below. A second part dealing specifically with how we might implement functional collaboration follows this article.

1. The Challenge for Lonergan

Thirty years experience as a university teacher has taught me that when students do not grasp the question being asked or the problem to be solved, what I have to say makes little or no sense to them. However, once students get a hold of the problem, their creative capacity to work together towards understanding, judging and implementation what is learned is set in motion. With this in mind, I would like to start by exploring the challenge Lonergan himself responded to that led to the discovery of functional specialization.

The challenge that Lonergan addressed – really a complex set of challenges – is axial²⁵ and an adequate communal response to the

²² “Troubled consciousness emerges when an Eddington contrasts two tables: the bulky solid colored desk at which he worked, and the manifold of colorless ‘wavicles’ so minute that the desk was mostly empty space.” *Method in Theology*, 84.

²³ G.K. Chesterton, *What’s Wrong with the World* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1994), 175.

²⁴ Philip McShane, “Implementation: The Ongoing Crisis of Method,” *Journal of Macrodynamic Analysis* 3 (2003), 11.

²⁵ Philip McShane first characterized Lonergan’s account of the stages of history as axial in “Middle Kingdom: Middle Man.” For an extensive discussion of McShane’s account, see Alessandra Drage: “Philip McShane’s Axial Period: An Interpretation,” *Journal of Macrodynamic Analysis* 4 (2003), 128–179. McShane considers what I treat in this essay, following Karl Jaspers, as two distinct periods that are part of one axial period whose poles, as it were, are the two times of the temporal subject, a notion adopted from Bernard J.F. Lonergan, *De Deo Trino II: Pars Systematica* (Rome: Gregorian UP, 1964), Question 21. My choice to follow Jaspers in this essay was a matter of convenience (in the medieval meaning of *de ratio convenientiae*) in order to highlight the parallels in the *shift* from the first to the second stage of meaning and the *shift* from the second to the third stage of meaning.

challenge will be long term, involving the emergence of a communal consent to a standard model²⁶ and the effective operation of functional collaboration, that is, what Lonergan named in *Insight*, cosmopolis.²⁷ What that might mean will be teased out as we move along. Lonergan himself expressed the axial dimension of the challenge in different ways. In the 1930s, he spoke of the ‘crisis in the West,’ and his appreciation of the crisis was squarely in the context of a pre-Vatican II Catholic worldview in which he was much influenced by Christopher Dawson’s analysis.²⁸ The crisis was the emergence of the dominance of secular philosophies of history—Marxism, liberalism, and fascism—in the West and their pernicious influence not only on political and economic life but on also on culture. His response was to work on a theology of Catholic Action.²⁹ While his effort was theoretical in a most profound sense of the word, it was ultimately directed towards meeting the challenge through the emergence of a higher viewpoint that would be a transformation of daily living, that is, in its Catholic meaning, the building up of the mystical Body of Christ. The higher viewpoint envisaged elevates the pragmatics of religious faith. As he expressed the issue in 1935: “Any reflection on modern history and its consequent ‘Crisis in the West’ reveals unmistakably the necessity of a Summa Sociologica. A metaphysic of history is not only imperative for the church to meet the attack of the Marxian materialist conception of history and its realization in apostolic Bolshevism: it is imperative if man is to solve the modern politico-economic entanglement, if political and economic forces are to be subjected to the rule of reason, if cultural values and all the achievement of the past is to be saved both from the onslaughts of purblind statesmen and from the perfidious diplomacy of the merely destructive power of communism.”³⁰

Lonergan’s response to the challenge was nuanced not reactionary. He would identify the problem in the context of the short and longer cycles of decline³¹ and as a crisis in culture precipitated by the breakdown of classical culture and the fitful emergence of modern

²⁶ On the notion of the standard model as I understand it, see Philip McShane, *Lonergan’s Standard Model of Effective Global Inquiry* at www.philipmcshane.org.

²⁷ See *CWL* 3, 263–267 and Philip McShane, “Arriving in Cosmopolis,” the keynote address for a workshop at Puebla, Mexico, 16 June 2011 and available at www.philipmcshane.org.

²⁸ I discuss Dawson’s influence in *LDSE*, 42-50.

²⁹ See Bernard Lonergan, “Essay in Fundamental Sociology,” in Michael Shute, (ed.), *Lonergan’s Early Economic Research* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 16–44.

³⁰ “*Pantôn Anakaphalaiôsis* (Restoration of All Things),” *METHOD: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 9/2 (1991), 156. The article was originally written in 1935.

³¹ On the shorter and longer cycles of decline see *CWL* 3, 251–57.

empirical culture.³² He often refers to the twin challenges of modern empirical science and historical-mindedness, both positive secular developments resisted by the Roman Church. In a phrase borrowed from Ortega y Gasset, he would speak of the need for Catholics ‘to live up to the level of the times.’ He referred to the problem of general history,³³ the turn to the idea and its implementation³⁴, the emergence of the primacy of praxis,³⁵ and the problem of collective responsibility.³⁶ In a specifically religious context, he talks about “the coming convergence of the world religions.”³⁷ He treats these problems genetically or

³² Bernard Lonergan, “Dimensions of Meaning,” *Collection: Papers by Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, vol. 4, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 232–244. He writes: “The crisis, then, that I have been attempting to depict is a crisis not of faith but of culture. There has been no new revelation from on high to replace the revelation given through Christ Jesus. There has been written no new Bible, and there has been founded no new church, to link us with him. But Catholic philosophy and Catholic theology are matters, not merely of revelation and faith, but also of culture. Both have been fully and deeply involved in classical culture. The breakdown of classical culture and, at last in our day, the manifest comprehensiveness and exclusiveness of modern culture confront Catholic philosophy and Catholic theology with the gravest problems, impose upon them mountainous tasks, invite them to Herculean labors.” *Ibid.*, 244.

³³ See Bernard Lonergan, *Topics in Education: The Cincinnati Lectures of 1959 on the Philosophy of Education*, ed. Frederick Crowe and Robert Doran, vol. 10, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 250–257.

³⁴ See Lonergan, “The Future of Christianity,” *A Second Collection*, 159. Robert Henman, “An Exploration of an Apparent Anomaly in Lonergan Scholarship,” cites 19 instances of the term implementation in the *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, none of which were indexed. The article is available on the SGEME blog page <http://www.sgeme.org/BlogEngine>.

³⁵ Lonergan begins to refer regularly and explicitly to *praxis* in the post-*Method* essays. In the essay, “Theology and Praxis,” in *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J.*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), he explicitly identifies *praxis* with *prudentia* or practical reasoning. With respect to the priority of practical reasoning see, for example, Lonergan, “Prolegomena to the Study of the Emerging Religious Consciousness of Our Time,” *A Third Collection*, 64. The notion of the priority of practical reasoning or *praxis* occurs regularly in *A Third Collection* and other post-*Method* essays.

³⁶ See Lonergan, “Natural Right and Historical Mindedness,” *A Third Collection*, 169.

³⁷ The phrase, which Lonergan repeated regularly in lectures and articles after 1972, is a reference to Robley Whitson’s book, *The Coming Convergence of World Religions* (New York: Newman, 1971). See *A Third Collection*, *passim* and Bernard Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980*, ed. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran, vol. 17, *Collected Works of*

developmentally in the context of stages and plateaus of meaning and most broadly still in terms of the dialectic triad of progress, decline, and redemption.³⁸

What we are talking about, then, when we speak of the implementation of Lonergan's method, is the eventual arrival on the stage of human history of the third stage of meaning.³⁹ For Lonergan, the line of development started with the search for a theology of Catholic action and ended with his discovery of functional specialization. His achievement was not a rearguard defense of Roman Catholic orthodoxy but a magnificent recovery of the best of what the intellectualist Catholic tradition had to offer to the crisis of the species and its relationship to this earth. Like Plato in the *Republic*, Lonergan sought an all-embracing Idea, which would serve to direct an ultimately practical solution to the crisis of our age. The rest of this article will be devoted to exploring what this might mean.

2. The Development of Human Collaboration

There is both a genetic and a dialectic component to the axial challenge. Genetically, there are stages in the development of human collaboration. Dialectically there is the personal, social, and global resistance to advances in human development that block or confound hoped-for advances, issues Lonergan treats personally and socially in terms of the biases, and with respect to general history, in the context of the shorter and longer cycles of decline.⁴⁰ As a result, axial shifts are characterized by long periods of problematic fragmentation in human effort. I turn first to sketch a genetic account of the development of human collaboration.

Collaboration is nothing new. We need only recall the wisdom in a tradition English nursery rhyme:

Jack and Jill went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water,
Jack fell down and broke his crown,
And Jill came tumbling after.

Bernard Lonergan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 204 [hereafter *CWL* 17].

³⁸ With respect to the seeming oddity of a three term dialectic, Lonergan writes: "But when this problem of evil is met by a supernatural solution, human perfection itself becomes a limit to be transcended, and then the dialectic is transformed for a bipolar to a tripolar conjunction and opposition. *CWL* 3, 749.

³⁹ *Method in Theology*, chapter 3; "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness," in *A Third Collection*.

⁴⁰ On the biases and the cycles of decline, see *CWL* 3, 250–61.

Even ardent Darwinian fundamentalists are coming to recognize there is a survival benefit to cooperation and collaboration.⁴¹ It is something human beings have known all along without the confirmation of philosophers, anthropologists, or social Darwinians, though no doubt we all need to be reminded once in a while of its benefits. Lonergan knew this as well, and he was very interested in building on the foundation of the spontaneous collaborative reality of human living. He developed rich theories of human solidarity, belief, and the structure of the good, which are well worth exploring.⁴² As we shall see shortly, human beings have developed all manner of ways to cooperate, and the nature of that development is quite relevant to our present topic. To jump ahead for a moment, functional specialization addresses the problem of the fragmentation caused by the shift to historical-mindedness and to system in human history and so the primary field in which it functions is the world of system and theory: it is a division of labour for theoretical work. Significantly, the shift to system is a signal or axial event in the history of human consciousness. The problem was how to integrate system and history.⁴³ The shift to system and historical-mindedness in history is prepared by prior developments in human collaboration. Lonergan traces these developments in the context of stages of meaning or plateaus of history.⁴⁴ A brief discussion of stages of meaning, which incorporates this emergence of system in human history, will, I hope, make this point clearer.

⁴¹ For an overview of recent developments, see David Sloan Wilson and Edward O. Wilson, "Rethinking the Theoretical Foundation of Sociobiology," *The Quarterly Journal of Biology* 82/4 (December 2007), 327–348.

⁴² On solidarity, see Bernard Lonergan, "*Pantôn Anakephalaiôsis* (The Restoration of All Things)," ed. with an introduction by Frederick E. Crowe, *METHOD: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 9/2 (1991), 139–172. On belief, see *CWL* 3, 728–35 and *Method in Theology*, 41–47. On the structure of the good, see *Method in Theology* 47–52 and *CWL* 10, chapters 3–5. Relevant here is Christopher Friels, "The Evolution of Lonergan's Structure of the Human Good," *The Heythrop Journal* 54/5, 56–766 (September 2013).

⁴³ On the relationship of system and history, see Patrick Brown, "System and History in Lonergan's Early Historical and Economic Manuscripts," *Journal of Macrodynamic Analysis* 1 (2001), 32–76.

⁴⁴ In Chapter 3: "Meaning" of *Method in Theology* Lonergan speaks of 'stages of meaning.' In the post-*Method* essay, "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness," he used the term plateaus so that expansions (of meaning), occur on a succession of plateaus. *A Third Collection*, 171. The idea has its origins in the 1930s essays on History and occurs in the context of 'the ideal line of history' which he divided into three stages: (1) spontaneous thought and history, (2) reflective thought and spontaneous history, and (3) reflective thought and reflective history. For an extended discussion of these origins see Michael Shute, *The Origins of Lonergan's Notion of the Dialectic of History: A Study of Lonergan's Early Writings on History* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1993).

2. Stages of Human Collaboration

The underlying collaborative character of human living was obvious to Lonergan, just as it was obvious to him in 1934 that neoliberal political theorists and ‘invisible hand’ free market economists had, in their dedication to establishing the primacy of self-interest and methodological individualism, missed the point.⁴⁵ In *Method in Theology*, Lonergan writes: “prior to the ‘we’ that results from the mutual love of an ‘I’ and a ‘thou,’ there is the earlier ‘we’ that precedes the distinction and survives its oblivion. The prior ‘we’ is vital and functional ... we spontaneously put out our hands to save another from falling.”⁴⁶ If we pay attention to the daily rhythms of life we cannot help but notice the spontaneous and mediated cooperation that is essential to human living. How else is it that I can communicate with my dog? How else can we raise children? How did children invent and perpetuate games and songs? How can we play baseball, cricket, or football? This is not to deny the significance of self-interest, in both its positive and negative manifestations. Nor does it minimize the importance of the development of a healthy ego or the formation of character, or the importance of liberty. The claim here is simply that none of these things are possible without the grounding of a spontaneously collaborative interaction among human beings. The mature person, then, emerges out of a nurturing family and community, and while there is much practical merit to contract law, community is not primarily a social contract among individuals.⁴⁷ Hegel remarks at the beginning of the

⁴⁵ Marxist and Fascist theorists also recognized this liberal mistake, but their solutions—class solidarity and class warfare in the first instance, and national solidarity in the second instance—were, to Lonergan, completely inadequate. In both cases, human liberty was sacrificed at the altar of some notion of social solidarity. The problem for Lonergan was how to have both freedom and order. In chapter 2 of *For a New Political Economy*, Lonergan writes: “Unity without freedom is easy; set up a dictator and give him a secret police. Freedom without unity is easy: let every weed glory in the sunshine of stupid adulation. But unity and freedom together, that is the problem. It demands discipline of mind and will; a keenness of apprehension that is not tied down to this or that provincial routine of familiar ideas nor yet has sunk to the jellyfish amorphism of scepticism; a vitality of response to situations that can acknowledge when the old game is done for, that can sacrifice the perquisites of past achievement, that can begin anew without bitterness, that can contribute without anticipating dividends to self-love and self-aggrandizement.” *For a New Political Economy*, ed. Philip McShane, vol. 21, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 20–21 (hereafter *CWL* 21).

⁴⁶ *Method in Theology*, 57.

⁴⁷ The meaning of ‘social contract’ is a complex point, especially if we transpose the notion into the religious context of covenant where it becomes a set of promises and obligations that binds a community. Philip McShane speaks of the hope for a new covenant of promises governing economics in *Sane Economics and Fusionism* (Axial Press, 2010), chapter 6.

Phenomenology of Spirit that it matters where you begin, and beginning with an assertion of methodological individualism is ultimately a dead end.

2.1 First Stage Collaboration

Granted, then, the priority of community in the development of the human species,⁴⁸ there is in the organic unity of the undifferentiated human community an initial division of labour that is simply a prolongation of pre-human attainment that shapes the organization of a tribe or clan and provides it with meaning and cohesion.⁴⁹ Like other primates (and, indeed, many other animals), we share an incipient division of community labour.⁵⁰ Wolves, for instance, take on different roles in the pack hunt, dividing up to flush out the prey; this pattern is mirrored in children's games of hide and seek. It is this incipient division of labour of intersubjective community that "even after civilization is attained ... survives in the family with its circle of relatives and its accretion of friends, in customs and folkways, in basic arts and crafts and skills, in language and song and dance, and most concretely of all in the inner psychology and radiating influence of women."⁵¹

However—and I think this is a fundamental reality stressed throughout Lonergan's work—human beings are in the presence of two kinds of knowing that, while related, we can sharply contrast. There is a knowledge of particulars we share with other animals, which Aquinas named *cogitativa* in us and *estimativa* in animals.⁵² However, there is also a knowledge proper to human beings that is of forms or ideas,

⁴⁸ Lonergan writes: "one might say that a single dialectic of community is related to a manifold of individual sets of neural demand functions through a manifold of individual dialectics. In this relationship the dialectic of community holds the dominant position, for it gives rise to the situations that stimulate neural demands, and it molds the orientation of intelligence that pre-consciously exercises the censorship." *CWL* 3, 243.

⁴⁹ *CWL* 3, 232–233.

⁵⁰ See, for example, such popular works such as Dorothy L. Cheney and Robert M. Seyfarth, *Baboon Metaphysics: The Evolution of the Social Mind* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Frans De Waal, *Primates and Philosophers: How Morality Evolved*, ed. Stephen Macedo and Josiah Ober (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006); and Stanley Coren, *How Dogs Think* (New York: Free Press, 2004).

⁵¹ See *CWL* 3, 237–38.

⁵² In *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, Lonergan cites positively Julien Peghaire, "A Forgotten Sense: The Cogitative According to St. Thomas Aquinas," *The Modern Schoolman* 20 (1943), 123–140, 211–229. *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, ed. Frederick Crowe and Robert Doran, vol. 2, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 44, n.150 (hereafter, *CWL* 3). More recently, there is William J. Zannardi's work for the SGEME seminar, "Preconceptual Apprehension and Evaluation of Objects" available at <http://www.sgeme.org/BlogEngine>.

known to us through cognitive process.⁵³ Concerning the significance of this, Lonergan writes in *Verbum*: “As this threatens to engulf us in the epistemological bog, a brief orientation now may save endless confusion later. A useful preliminary is to note that animals know, not mere phenomena, but things: dogs know their masters, bones, other dogs, and not merely the appearances of these things. Now this sensitive integration of sensible data also exists in the human animal and even in the human philosopher. Take it as knowledge of reality, and there results the secular contrast between the solid sense of reality and the bloodless categories of the mind. Accept the sense of reality as criterion of reality, and you are a materialist, sensist, positivist, pragmatist, sentimentalist, and so on, as you please. Accept reason as the criterion but retain the sense of reality as what gives meaning to the term ‘real,’ and you are an idealist; for, like the sense of reality, the reality defined by it is nonrational. Insofar as I grasp it, the Thomist position is the clearheaded third position: reason is the criterion and, as well, it is reason—not the sense of reality—that gives meaning to the term ‘real.’ The real is what is; and ‘what is’ is known in the rational act, judgment.”⁵⁴ Lonergan’s account of the two kinds of knowing grounds his basic positions on knowing, objectivity, and metaphysics.⁵⁵ Confusion about the two kinds of knowing informs the counter-positions.⁵⁶ It also grounds his account of the dialectic of history, including his account of the stages of meaning, and it is this account of the dialectic of history and stages of meaning that especially concerns me now.

Of signal importance in our story is the recurrent, cumulative, and progressive character of human intelligence rooted in ‘the natural desire to know’ and its creative proclivity to meet challenges through successful invention, a reality essential to our collective survival. It is an engine of human progress, but also a significant challenge to the integral meaning and organic wholeness of intersubjective community. While the

⁵³ I note that in the field of cognitive science there is considerable confusion on the difference between the *cogitativa* and cognition. Typically, the two are conflated, or what Lonergan calls cognition is ignored or treated as an epiphenomenon. For an overview, see Rita Carter, *Exploring Consciousness* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002). The confusion is evident in this book.

⁵⁴ *CWL* 2, 20.

⁵⁵ *CWL* 3, 413. Grappling with Lonergan’s basic positions on knowing, epistemology, and metaphysics is a key challenge for attaining a luminous entry into functional collaboration. Nonetheless, it is possible to proceed with a strategically minimalist approach, such as that advocated by Philip McShane in *Method in Theology: Revisions and Implementations*. See especially Part 1, Chapter 3, “Minimalist Functional Antifoundationism,” where McShane writes: “It is summed up in a single categorial stand: ... ‘let there be an operative division of work in any area of human inquiry.’” The text is available online at <http://www.philipmcshane.org>.

⁵⁶ See *CWL* 3, 413.

full potential or capacity-for-performance of human intelligence is compactly present from the beginning, it is practical intelligence **that** initially drives human development. In the first instance, human creativity is primarily directed towards survival, and this leads to the invention of tools that improve the probabilities of survival for the group. “Primitive hunters take time out from hunting to make spears, and primitive fishers take time out from fishing to make nets. Neither spears nor nets in themselves are objects of desire. Still, with notable ingenuity and effort, they are fashioned, because for practical intelligence desires are recurrent, labor is recurrent, and the comparatively brief time spent making spears or nets is amply compensated by the greater ease with which more game or fish is taken on an indefinite series of occasions.”⁵⁷ Thus human communities have the capacity to develop in practical matters, inventing new tools, adapting to changing conditions, and organizing human community to meet the changes. This capacity is present whether we are speaking of individuals, groups, or the species as a whole.

We note, however, a basic tension between the finality of practical developments and the inertial routines of human intersubjectivity. Invention means new tools and new ways of doing things and to these we must adapt. This demand may be resisted by the well-worn patterns of prior human habit. Consequently, there is necessarily, even in the most well adjusted community, a lag, a period of adjustment and adaptation, from the time a new idea emerges in the mind of the inventor to the time to when the new idea becomes itself a settled routine in a new more efficient community. There are in history many, many examples of this dynamic, both successes and failures.⁵⁸ As human collaboration itself evolves, the difficulties of negotiating the tension between practical demands for intelligent innovation and the inertia of human habit lead to a more complex practical division of labour in the community and with it the related problems of correspondence between the demands of practical intelligence and the underlying intersubjective reality of human communities. Inventions produce new situations; new situations produce novel challenges for which the spontaneous division of labour, which is simply an extension of our biology, is not enough.

To take one outstanding historical example, the emergence of the urban center, along with related developments of planned agriculture and

⁵⁷ *CWL* 3, 233. The difference between making nets and spears and fishing as distinct activities grounds Lonergan’s understanding of the two-circuit economy. See Michael Shute, “Real Economic Variables,” *Divyadaan: Journal of Philosophy and Education* 21 (2010), 1831–94.

⁵⁸ Arnold Toynbee’s compendious twelve volumes, *A Study of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948), are replete with examples. Lonergan read the first six volumes published in 1941 and would later refer positively to Toynbee’s notions of ‘creative minority and dominant majority,’ ‘internal and external proletariat,’ and ‘universal religion.’

the domestication of animals, is an advance that evokes the occurrence of a new, more differentiated practical division of labour suitable to life in larger groups with more complex tasks to perform.⁵⁹ While the organization of the family and tribe survives the transition, the division of labour of the family is inadequate for a community composed of many families and tribes. Ideally, family organization becomes but one component of a more comprehensive social and cultural order. There emerge specialized roles and tasks that are instituted in civil society. Furthermore, the emergence of towns and cities itself tends towards the higher organizational structure of empires which rely on a cultural and religious solidarity to fuse together disparate groups. The long line of developments in practical intelligence results in the higher cultures of empires, such as existed in Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Andes, and along the Indus, Ganges, Yellow, and Yangtze River valleys. Technological and economic advances provide the leisure to make possible the higher cultural fusion, which in turn evokes a complex division of labour with a hierarchy of specialist castes. The whole division of labour or social system stands in sharp contrast to the simpler division of labour of hunter-gatherer tribes and clans from which the higher culture initially developed. In this kind of first plateau (stage) expansion, with its many successes and failures, the primary operator of the expansion from hunter-gatherer culture to the high culture of, for example, Temple States, is practical intelligence. The system is held together, made socially effective, by a mythic cult, which provides the ethos for social cohesion.

The problem with empire is that it is ruled by common sense intelligence, and common sense is not ultimately adequate to sustain the higher level of complexity. The expansion of empire meets with diminishing returns. What was once the rule of a creative minority dedicated to advancing practical efficiencies of agriculture and economy becomes the settled decadent routine of a dominant majority of bureaucratic rule. Lonergan writes: “It is vigorous as long as it continues to expand, for then it has a social purpose to which all else is subordinate. But expansion inevitably yields to space; decreasing returns are as much a phenomenon of empire as of business. Next, once the expansion has ended, there is no social purpose beyond preserving what has been achieved.”⁶⁰ Inevitably, the rule of priests is replaced by the rule of warriors and order is reduced to rule of the power.⁶¹ A ruler rules

⁵⁹ Jane Jacob argues, in *The Economy of Cities* (New York: Vintage Press, 1970) and *The Nature of Economies* (New York: Vintage Press, 2001), that the invention of agriculture and the domestication of animals makes ‘long-sustained farming’ possible and comes about after the emergence of cities.

⁶⁰ “Essay in Fundamental Sociology” in *LEER*, 23.

⁶¹ Lonergan writes: “The god or goddess that is tied down and sacred to only one spot is unequal to the task of imposing social order beyond his frontier. The gods of the states made commercial treaties only to quarrel again,

until a more energetic and ruthless alternative appears on the scene. It was this pattern of the inevitable rise and fall of empire that Augustine identifies with the ‘city of man’ which he contrasts with the advance of the city of God.

2.2 *The First Axial Shift and the Emergence of Stage Two Collaboration*

The failure of empire to solve the problem of human collaboration as it extends beyond the tribe or clan is a sign of the first axial age. In *The Origin and Goal of History*, Karl Jaspers locates this axial age in the period between 800 BCE and 200 CE when “the spiritual foundations of humanity were laid simultaneously and independently in China, India, Persia, Judea, and Greece. And these are the foundations upon which humanity still subsists today.”⁶² Jaspers includes as axial figures Parsva and Tirthankara, founding figures in Jainism; the authors of the Upanishads and Siddhartha Gautama Buddha, the founding figure of Buddhism, all from the Indian sub-continent; Lao Tzu and Confucius from China; Homer, Socrates, Parmenides, Heraclitus, Thucydides, Archimedes among the Greeks; Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Deutero-Isaiah from the Hebrews; and Zoroaster from Persia.⁶³ Eric Voegelin in his *Order and History* extended the time line of the axial period to 6th Century CE to incorporate Islam.⁶⁴ In the fourth volume of this five-volume effort, Voegelin announces that he “breaks with the program I have developed in *Order and History*,” coming to the view that the ‘great leap’ or axial period was primarily a leap in consciousness.⁶⁵ This shift in view away from a time-line view and towards an understanding of the axial shift in terms of differentiations of consciousness aligns with Lonergan’s position on historical stages, a position he held as early as 1934.⁶⁶ What is common among the religious figures and movements

till finally the whole was swallowed up in a Babylon. Priests yielded to warrior kings.” “Essay in Fundamental Sociology” in *LEER*, 23.

⁶² Karl Jaspers, *The Way to Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 98.

⁶³ See Karl Jaspers, *The Origins and Goal of History* (London: Routledge Press, 2011 [1949]).

⁶⁴ Eric Voegelin, *Order and History, The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, volumes 14–19 (Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1998–2001).

⁶⁵ Cited in Michael Franz, “Editor’s Introduction,” in Eric Voegelin, *The Ecumenic Age*, volume IV, *Order and History*, volume 17 of *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 3.

⁶⁶ Lonergan’s account of historical stages first appears in the spring of 1934, with the “Essay in Fundamental Sociology.” While Lonergan did not commonly use the term ‘axial age,’ the account of historical stages he developed in the 1930s was organized on the basis of developments in the capacity-for-performance of human intelligence. The shift from the first to the second historical stage aligns with the notion of a first axial age. Lonergan’s

cited by Jaspers and Voegelin is the effort to come to terms with a universal basis for human order beyond the organic solidarity of the tribe or clan or the cultic-ordained division of labour of the empire limited to geographical location. One could now be an authentic Buddhist, Christian, or Muslim beyond allegiance to tribe or empire.

Loneragan certainly acknowledged the significance of the emergence of the world religions.⁶⁷ However, the pivotal focus in his treatment of stages of meaning was on the emergence of higher viewpoints in human consciousness. Specifically, his attention was drawn to the development of human intelligence. For this reason he takes a particular interest in the process of the secularization of the Greek gods, the related developments in Greek literature, theatre, and science, and the subsequent breakthrough to philosophy, most outstandingly with the discovery of mind by Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.⁶⁸ With Socrates, there explicitly emerges the theoretic ‘what question.’ Plato established the reality of the idea or form. Aristotle empirically links the ‘what question’ and the ‘form’ by grasping the pivotal function of ‘insight into phantasm.’ With the entrance of Greek science and Plato and Aristotle’s advance toward a systematic philosophy, there emerges the higher theoretic viewpoint in principle capable of re-organizing human collaboration and heading off the inevitable decline of the Greek polis conceived as a pragmatic state, ruled by might. In place of might, Plato proposed the virtues. It was this possibility of a polis of virtuous citizens ruled by the philosopher-king with knowledge of the forms or the idea that lies behind Plato’s assertion of the social significance of philosophy in the *Republic*.⁶⁹ The entrance

understanding of the shift predates the original publication of Jasper’s *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* by 15 years. It is worth noting, however, that in Christopher Dawson’s book of essays, *Progress and Religion: an Historical Inquiry* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1929), we find an account of historical stages that I believe influenced Lonergan. See Shute, *The Origins of Lonergan’s Notion of the Dialectic of History*, for a detailed account of all the above.

⁶⁷ Lonergan’s attention in the 1930s was on Christianity, and he readily acknowledged the fruitful intellectual unity found in the coalition of Greek philosophy and Christian religion. In *Method in Theology* and in his post-*Method* essays, Lonergan’s attention shifts to the “emerging religious consciousness of our times” as he considers the Catholic contribution to the coming convergence of world religions. See “Prolegomena to the Study of the Emerging Religious Consciousness of Our Time,” in *A Third Collection*, 55–72.

⁶⁸ Using Bruno Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind* (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1960), as a guide, Lonergan stresses the role of aesthetic development in preparing the ground for the discoveries of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. See *Method in Theology*, 90–91.

⁶⁹ See “Essay in Fundamental Sociology” in *LEER*, 24. Eric Voegelin, in *Plato and Aristotle*, volume III, *Order and History*, vol. 16, *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2000),

of theory on the historical stage is the emergence of the systematic capacity-for-performance in human collaboration—the turn to the Idea—beyond the limitation of common sense practicality. Lonergan conceives it this way. A root cause of the axial problem is in the inability of common sense intelligence to provide the way forward past the inevitable decline of empire. “The lag of intellectual development, its difficulty, and its apparently meager returns bear in an especial manner on common sense. It is concerned with the concrete and particular. It entertains no aspirations about reaching abstract and universal laws. It easily is led to rationalize its limitations by engendering a conviction that other forms of human knowledge are useless or doubtfully valid. Every specialist runs the risk of turning his specialty into a bias by failing to recognize and appreciate the significance of other fields. Common sense almost invariably makes that mistake; for it is incapable of analyzing itself, incapable of making the discovery that it too is a specialized development of human knowledge, incapable of coming to grasp that its peculiar danger is to extend its legitimate concern for the concrete and the immediately practical into disregard of larger issues and indifference to long-term results.”⁷⁰ Lonergan recognized that the needed higher viewpoint or Idea would come from the emergence of a differentiation of human consciousness or, if you will, the emergence of a new stage of human meaning that provided a basis for a systematic division of labour in human collaboration. The higher viewpoint emerges with the discovery of the theoretical ‘what-question’ among the Greeks. However, the full viewpoint fails to be effective as a social philosophy.⁷¹ Some 17 centuries later in medieval Europe, the Greek achievement receives a second life in the philosophical/theological synthesis of Thomas Aquinas. In the context of Lonergan’s stages, the first axial shift aligns with the emergence of theory in the transition from the first to the second stage. This shift is primarily a development in human understanding embodied in persons: it was Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle who discovered the mind, not ‘the Greeks,’ though their discovery was certainly communicated to the Academy and had its influence on Greek culture.

It is important to keep in mind that for Lonergan the stages of meaning are ideal types. Besides the advance that is the emergence of theory, there are the pernicious effects of bias. Thus, while there is the Greek discovery of mind culminating in Aristotle, his disciples miss the full measure of the discovery. Aristotle’s understanding of philosophical system, and his logic, derived from an empirical appreciation of the order of his own intellect; however, it was the techniques of logic that

chapter 3, argues that the *Republic* is Plato’s response to a decline of order in the Greek *polis*.

⁷⁰ *CWL* 3, 251-

⁷¹ See, “Essay In Fundamental Sociology,” *LEER*, 24–27, for Lonergan’s early analysis of this failure.

tended to take over philosophic discourse. The legacy of the living mind discovered by three Greeks becomes a static rule of logic. Similarly, Aquinas' rediscovery of Aristotle's method and his application of that method to the problems of theology provided scholasticism with its systematic foundation. However, soon enough scholasticism forgot its roots in the operations of human intelligence. By the 14th century, a decadent version of scholasticism began to take hold, a tendency solidified by the Council of Trent. Given the fundamental coherence established by Thomas Aquinas, the decadent scholasticism survived relatively intact until the midpoint of the last century. Again, Aquinas' rediscovery of the living mind and his brilliant application of it to the problems of philosophy and theology became a method of casuistry. Just as Cultic empires eventually calcified into the bureaucratic rule of dominant minorities, a similar pattern ultimately beset, first, Aristotle's philosophy, and later, the scholastic synthesis of Aquinas. Nor in Lonergan's view was secular philosophy immune to this pattern, for the conceptualism that infected scholastic philosophy has also had a dominating influence in western philosophy. Lonergan writes: "Five hundred years separate Hegel from Scotus. As will appear from our discussion of the method of metaphysics, that notable interval of time was largely devoted to working out in a variety of manners the possibilities of the assumption that knowing consists in taking a look."⁷² In other words, counter-positions rule modern philosophy.

Actual history, however, is a concatenation of lines of progress, decline, and recovery. The emergence of system makes possible the acceleration of progress, for system provides universally applicable contexts for promoting advance. System potentially offers a more efficient division of labour. For example, a well-run economy will eventually provide increased leisure, first for some, and then for all.⁷³ Advances, however brilliant, are not assured, nor is hope, however faint, to be abandoned. The stakes, however, are higher once system emerges, for along with the possibility of accelerating advance, there also arises the probability of systematizing error and bias. The accelerated advance is the result of the creative minority that seizes the moment and catapults the culture forward. We find this accelerated advance in the brilliant flowerings of Greek literature, philosophy and science, and in the

⁷² *CWL* 3, 396. The context for this claim is found in chapter 12, section 7 of *Insight*. Related to this point, in *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, Lonergan writes: "Scotus flatly denied the fact of insight into phantasm. Kant, whose critique was not of the pure reason but of the human mind as conceived by Scotus repeatedly affirmed that our intellects are purely discursive, that all intuition is sensible" (*CWL* 2:39-40).

⁷³ In his "Essay in Fundamental Sociology," Lonergan writes: "The function of progress is to increase leisure" *LEER*, 42. For Lonergan, an increased rate of leisure, not full employment, was the goal of economic development. On the potential role of economy in the expansion of leisure, see *CWL* 21, 18-20, 22, 25.

achievements of the high Middle Ages. Systematized error leads to the stagnant cultures of decadent majorities and creates a serious mess as, for example, in the contemporary global economy. Thus, while human stupidity and malice have been with us through the course of history, with the emergence of theory and science there emerges systematic stupidity and malice. It is one thing for the shepherd to search for the lost sheep; it is another problem for the shepherd when the whole herd is lost. In the current economic situation, of which we are all so well aware, bad economic theories combine with an intermeshed global economic and financial system to produce a crisis-ridden system. We are not going to solve the problem by jailing a few bad apples in the financial sector. The problem is the whole system. Moreover, as Lonergan observed, incomplete efforts to correct the stagnation tend towards an accelerated decline. The good is reduced to an ideology of pragmatism, as evidenced in the work of a Machiavelli, in the diplomatic practices of a Metternich or a Kissinger, or by the organized efforts of an opposition aiming to destroy the order itself, as with communism.

Nonetheless, the path from creative minorities to dominant minorities is not simply a downward descent. There remains the native capacity of the human mind to wonder, what Lonergan called the pure desire to know. Thus, the seed of human creativity springs anew with each birth, for no society is as inflexible as an inert gas. So it is that the leisurely curiosity of 13th century monks and, later, the economic surge during the renaissance provided seeds that would flower into the scientific revolution of the 18th century, and the breakthrough to historical mindedness that emerged in incipient form with Vico, and found its legs in the 19th century.

2.3 The Second Axial Shift and the Possibility of the Emergence of Stage Three

These two developments, the scientific revolution and the breakthrough to historical mindedness, are contributions to what McShane identifies as the longer cycle of incline and they are seeds of a future shift towards a third stage of meaning and beyond.⁷⁴ As such, they are important for understanding the second axial shift now underway, which is the fuller context for understanding the emergence of functional specialization.

Lonergan was fond of quoting Herbert Butterfield's remark on the massive importance of the scientific revolution: "It outshines everything since the rise of Christianity and reduces the Renaissance and the Reformation to the rank of mere episodes, mere internal displacements, within the system of medieval Christendom."⁷⁵ The scientific revolution

⁷⁴ On cycles of incline, see especially the *Prehumous* series
<http://www.philipmcsane.org>.

⁷⁵ Herbert Butterfield, *Origins of Modern Science, 1300-1800* (London: Bell and Sons, 1965).

displaces the Aristotelian system with the potential for a much more comprehensive method for organizing theoretical work. Lonergan writes: “The use of such a [comprehensive] framework gave Aristotelian thought its majestic coherence and comprehensiveness. The interlocking of each part with all the others precluded the possibility of merely patchwork revisions. As Professor Butterfield has observed, to correct Aristotle effectively, one must go beyond him; and to go beyond him is to set up a system equal in comprehensiveness and more successful in inner coherence and in conformity with fact.”⁷⁶ However, as McShane has cautioned, the scientific revolution has just begun. The successful science⁷⁷ to date is physics, and it is a lower science.⁷⁸ It can be argued, I think, that only physics and chemistry have so far been successful in establishing commonly agreed on constants and variables for collaboration and that the remaining ‘sciences’ are struggling without such well-established foundations. Even in physics, there are still issues with respect to ‘the standard model.’ There is the accepted theory which dominates present research, but it has a rival in string theory which continues to attract theoretical attention.⁷⁹ Nonetheless, it is clear that there have been massive displacements in human living over the past 250 years caused by the technological advances made possible by the ongoing scientific revolution, which, in turn, have massive implications for economy, politics, and cultures. The optimistic amongst us will point to advances in science and technology with the potential to improve life, and there is certainly evidence for this. However, by the same token, the displacement of human living caused by the succession of the industrial, electrical, and chip revolutions has accelerated human atrocity such that Eric Voegelin speaks of “the murderous grotesque of our time.”⁸⁰ In a similar vein, Lonergan has written that “philosophers for at least two centuries, through doctrines on politics, economics, education, and

⁷⁶ *CWL* 2, 3–4. In a footnote Lonergan notes: “The point is made repeatedly by Herbert Butterfield, *The Origins of Modern Science, 1300-1800*.”

⁷⁷ See *Method in Theology*, 3-4.

⁷⁸ See Philip McShane, “Lonergan and the Philosophy of the Lower Sciences,” <http://www.philipmcshane.org>.

⁷⁹ Lochlainn O’Raifeartaigh writes in a review article: “The next step in creating a more unified theory of the basic interactions will probably be much more difficult. All the major theoretical developments of the last twenty years, such as grand unification, supergravity, and supersymmetric string theory, are almost completely separated from experience. There is a great danger that theoreticians may get lost in pure speculations.” Lochlainn O’Raifeartaigh and Norbert Straumann, “Gauge Theory: Historical Origins and Some Modern Developments,” *Reviews of Modern Physics* 72 (2000), 15, cited in Philip McShane, “Lonergan’s Meaning of Complete in the Fifth Canon of Scientific Method,” *Journal of Macrodynamical Analysis* 4 (2004), 53.

⁸⁰ Eric Voegelin, “Reason: The Classical Experience,” *Published Essays 1966–1985*, vol. 6, *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, 265–291.

through ever further doctrines, have been trying to remake man, and have done not a little to make human life unlivable.”⁸¹

The breakthrough to historical mindedness, the realization that we cannot understand our human nature apart from understanding history, is the other seed of a second axial shift, a point Lonergan was so luminously conscious of that he once remarked that “all my work has been introducing history into Catholic theology.”⁸² If we characterize the first axial shift as the transition from the dominance of common sense practicality towards the higher control of universal religion and theory, the dislocations between systems and their implementation in the practical making of history characterizes the second axial shift. The result is the massive contemporary fragmentation of human effort.⁸³ We have not one, but many, world religions that jostle side by side. Within Christianity, while there is a rump unity of Roman Catholicism, there is also a splintering profusion of protestant denominations. With respect to theory, which is the primary concern for the praxis of universities, we have a complex confusion of sciences, disciplines, and studies lacking a sound basis for working in common on the real problems of our time.⁸⁴

In this confusion, how can the university effectively contribute to the collective task of making history? What is the contemporary academic context that functional specialization addresses? Scientists and scholars face the reality of an ever-increasing quantity of research in ever-increasing volumes of specialist literature in ever-increasing subdivisions of specialties. Unless their field of study is very narrowly defined, scientists and scholars cannot realistically keep pace with the literature in their own specialties. The growth of the data is enormous. I doubt, for example, that anyone has come near to reading all the literature cited in the *Lonergan Newsletter*. Along with the fragmentation of subjects and fields specialties, there is an evident need for interdisciplinary approaches to problems and consequently a proliferation of new sub-disciplines that attempt to bridge the perceived gaps, but often end up adding to the process of fragmentation. How are

⁸¹ *CWL* 10, 232.

⁸² Cited by Frederick E. Crowe in “‘All my work has been introducing history into Catholic theology’ (Lonergan, March 28, 1980),” *Lonergan Workshop* 10 (1994), 49–81.

⁸³ Patrick Brown in a footnote in his paper, “The Longer Cycle of Decline and the Dialectic of Secularization,” presented at *West Coast Methods Seminar* at Loyola Marymount University, in April 2012, observes that “Lonergan, in the historical manuscripts, treats this process as one moving from a relatively effective social unity to fragmentation under the rubrics of ‘atomization’ and ‘Zersplitterung.’ E.g., ‘Analytic Concept of History,’ 27 (noting ‘the atomization, the *Zersplitterung*, that follows from decline’).”

⁸⁴ I note also that with respect to the lag between the emergence of a science and its acceptance as standard practice within a scientific community, the lag is longer, the adjustment more difficult in the (would be) human sciences. See *CWL* 10, 92–96.

these diverse approaches to be brought together effectively? This question is reflected in various pleas for holist approaches to a wide range of human concerns, most famously in health and ecology.⁸⁵ The physicist David Bohm, in his 1980 work, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, identified the contemporary fragmentation of knowledge and the need for a unified system. This issue is now central to the Grand Unification Theory project in physics.⁸⁶ In 1988, Arne Naess identified the need for an ordered specialization in ecology.⁸⁷ The issue, however, is wider and deeper than the fragmentation in specific fields such as physics and ecology. The fragmentation of knowledge is endemic to all sciences and disciplines, as is the need for a structure for collaboration within and between fields. It is just such a structure and method that functional specialization addresses, for while Lonergan presented functional specialization as a division of labour or method for theology, which was the field he taught, the method he discovered has implications for the future organization of all fields.

3. Conclusion

The contemporary fragmentation is a complex reality that I can hardly do justice to in a paper. Lonergan first grasped the set of challenges that led to functional specialization early in his intellectual journey. However, it took more than thirty years for him to reach a satisfactory solution. And while he discovered the framework for theoretic collaboration, he left the task of implementing the collaborative structure to those that would follow his lead. What Lonergan wrote about ‘the financial problem’ in his essay, *For a New Political Economy*, I think applies equally well to the challenge of functional collaboration. “Now to work out in detail the conditions under which this [solution] must be done, and to prescribe the rules that must be observed in doing it, is a vast task. there will be need not merely for sober and balanced speculation, but also for all the concrete inventiveness, all the capacity for discovery and adaptation, that we can command.”⁸⁸ The implementation of ‘Lonergan’s method’ will also call for “all the concrete inventiveness, all the capacity for discovery and adaptation” we can muster, and we cannot know in advance more than the broad lines of

⁸⁵ The literature on holistic health and holistic medicine, both popular and specialist, is enormous. Significant sources in biology and ecology include James Lovelock, *Gaia: a New Look at Life on Earth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); Edward O. Wilson, *Consilience* (New York: Little Brown and Company, 1998); Stewart Brand, *Whole Earth Discipline* (New York: Viking, 2009); and the work of Arne Naess, see note 87 below.

⁸⁶ David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (London: Routledge, 1980).

⁸⁷ Arne Naess, “Deep Ecology and Ultimate Premises,” *The Ecologist* 18/4-5 (1988), 128–131 (<http://www.theecologist.org/>).

⁸⁸ *CWL* 21, 105–106.

a way forward. In anticipation of the second part of this essay, it is perhaps possible to glimpse the difficulties of providing a clear linear notion of how McShane imagines Lonergan's method being applied. I would hazard a guess that the full scope of the challenge and the implementation of the solution he has in mind is as rich as the forward leaning creative and hopeful vision that he shares with Lonergan. However, I save that rich future-orientated fantasy for the second part of this essay.

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