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Chapter 1 Functional Research into Lonergan's Collected Works

1 The Project

It seems a convenient time to begin this work, forty years after the completion of *Method in Theology*. Nor is there any point in bemoaning the years in between, the opportunities lost. Best to have a shot at beginning, remembering the McShane motto of the late 1970s: "if a thing is worth doing, then it is worth doing badly."

We could even get going on a discussion regarding the right place to start, and I myself have a variety of suggestions, made over the years.¹ I give one, since it is relevant to where you and I go here. It is that we could profitably start in a messy effort to place ourselves in the second half of page 250 of *Method in Theology* where Lonergan asks for a double effort of taking a position, a stand. The position at issue would be a position on the standard model, but the position to be expressed in the present context is "where I stand now"² in regard to general and special categories of "a

¹ I am asking us to plunge in here at what, perhaps, may seem a reasonably obvious place, the zone of research. The reasons for my selection of approach are, however, quite complex, and not to be aired for the moment. But I appeal to all interested people to try this beginning, even if your bent is, say, communications, or systematics, or your interests are only in popularizing Lonergan's work. I intend us to get through all the specialties in a pedagogical fashion, and indeed into their commonsense reverberations, in the next couple of years of collaborative seminar work.

Further, I would note that the work is going to be tentative, messy. Each person who signs on for this seminar needs to be ready for a back-and-forth about trying out this climb to a new differentiation of consciousness and expression. The back-and-forth from me will be both personal and communal, something normal in a seminar. There will be common muddles, for instance, about what is meant by holding to a definite pattern of sentence and phrase structures, or by holding back from pushing on into other specialties. This is like the emergence of the division of labour in the eighteenth century. You are to be focused on making a piece of wire, not a pin; or an axle, not an automobile. *FuSe 4* is going to be a general (in the best sense of that word!) invitation to think out the main difficulty that we are facing in all this. That main difficulty is the first of the two problems mentioned in the final paragraph of section 1 below.

² It may be useful to think of the parallel with Luther's 'here I stand.' There is the problem here of each of us being "at pains not to conceal his

study of human understanding.”³ In a previous effort at collaboration in functional interpretation I asked the participants to express the story of their present stands in their essays and they did so: it is a valuable element in the contribution.⁴ But I do not do so here. I suggest that the effort be made privately: a highly profitable effort. What is sought here⁵ is simply an effort to pick up on a phrase, sentence, paragraph or section of Lonergan's works that strikes you as worthy of **pursuing**, where by pursuing is meant what you or I have been struck by, noted, found, as **worth cycling through the process sketched by Lonergan in 1969**.⁶

My suggestion is that we plunge in without me giving further directions, and this comes from me as somewhat competent in the zone: recall Lonergan's advice on the first page of his short ramble in *Method* about research.⁷ But, more importantly, I would ask you to recall standard initial research in any area with which you are familiar. And you can, and should, add to that context some advertence to the parallel that I have

tracks,” or theirs (*Method in Theology*, 193).

³The subtitle of *Insight*.

⁴There is a volume of *JMDA* (*Journal of Macrodynamical Analysis*, edited by Michael Shute) on Interpretation: *Functional Interpretation*, *JMDA*, vol. 4 (2004). It was a first attempt at such specialization. I would hope that those who participated in that attempt will join in the present venture so that when we move on to the second specialty they will lift us to new refinements of differentiated expression.

⁵Indeed, best to give a **here and now** to this. I envisage a sort-of registration [to me: pmcshane@shaw.ca], for this e-seminar, by Monday, January 10th, 2011. The seminar will run as long as it takes, but let us think of Friday April 1st as an end-day. The only homework is a final page or four on the ‘research topic,’ though I envisage a climb that could be tricky; the trickiness is the topic of *FuSe 4*.

⁶“Functional Specialties in Theology,” *Gregorianum* 50 (1969): 485-505. I am working now on analogies with my first year of teaching advanced mathematical physics, 1960-1961. I want to see the stumbling efforts of graduate students who have really no grip on the standard model. The difference with those students is that this was clear to them from the community of physics. Here we do not have that advantage. A technical expression of this may be of interest: see chapter 10 of my book *Method in Theology: Revisions and Implementations*, “Metaphysical Equivalents and Functional Specialization.”

⁷*Method in Theology*, 149-151. A central element in my education was the editing of the two Lonergan Volumes, *CWL* 18, “Phenomenology and Logic” and *CWL* 21, “For a New Political Economy.” The two volumes remain uncycled. I would note especially the “fruit to be borne” (the first page of the chapter on Communications in *Method in Theology*) by Volume 21 in our times; yet I hear no echo in governments, banks, media or streets of the two simply slogans that bubble from that volume: [a] There are two types of firm [b] the exchange of money is a promise. (See number 7 in the list of the text on page 25 below).

regularly made to present particle physics.⁸ Nor do you have to have competence in physics to get the point. There are the observers, the data sifters. They are competent enough to identify anomalous traces, even to have a stab at estimating significance. “This looks strange ... did I miss equally strange tracks earlier ... should I look further ...?” The further looking—literally is not a theoretic adventure, but a reach for **an assured grip on the anomaly**. The theoretic adventure, with some very few exceptions, is left to the next groups, the theoreticians and the historians.

This, then, is the task in which I invite participation.⁹ But I cannot just leave it like that. I take, rather, the stand of a teacher, “to him one must go, join in his seminar.”¹⁰ Indeed, I think of this as a seminar for beginners, attracted by Lonergan’s suggestion of an eightfold collaboration. Further, I think of the seminar as having a membership of about a dozen, and of some of those not being in what I would call the primary zone of study, the works of Lonergan. What of such people, eager to discover what functional research is? I echo Lonergan’s comment in his second page on Research: “My answer is to let Christian theologians begin from where they already stand. Each will consider one or more areas relevant to theological research. Let him work there. He will find that the method is designed to take care of the matter.”¹¹ For *Christian theologians* read any researcher in any area. It may well be that the area is ecology, musicology, zoology, whatever. As we dozen share together our efforts we will find that such deviances help us to see new points, and not to miss old points. But our overall focus is the *Collected Works* of Lonergan and the problem we face is the problem of finding old and new points that have been missed in the past seventy-five years.¹²

⁸ The parallel has turned up frequently in recent essays but in fact it emerged in my struggle in the last decade to figure out our present topic, the functional specialty Research. That emergence is represented by three site books of the past five years: the first, *ChrISt in History*, deals with “Research” in chapter 8; *Method in Theology: Revisions and Implementations* has two chapters, 11 and 22, both titled “Research;” Chapter 7, “Hodic Logic” of *Lonergan’s Standard Model of Effective Global Inquiry* is on research. Chapter 14 of that book is also relevant to our struggle, as indeed is the whole book. I would note, however, that chapter one of *Lonergan’s Standard Model* is liable to be discouraging: it is a long chapter on Goedel, a topic of perhaps my last face-to-face conversation with Lonergan. Skip it at first if you tackle the whole book. Finally, I will have more references to give on research when we come to deal with the functional specialty history when I bring us to reflect on Fred Crowe’s gallant but failed attempt in that area in his *Theology of the Christian Word. A Study in History*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1978).

⁹ This e-seminar should interest a dozen or so. I intend to put a public list of participants together, as is normal in any seminar. So if you are shy of such publicity, then do ask for privacy!

¹⁰ *Method in Theology*, 149.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 150.

¹² 1935 is a convenient date for thinking about the beginning of the non-comprehension of Lonergan. It is the year of his pleading with his Jesuit

It seems sensible to begin the seminar as one would do so in any area. I think, as I noted already, of my own early specialization in mathematical physics. In such a physics seminar I would not just point to the library: I would list interesting zones that participants could take up for starters, and perhaps they might stick with that start, if their creativity did not lead them to their own startling start. Further, and again I am thinking concretely about seminar-structures, I see no problem in two or three people picking the same topic and working it either alone or together. The question raised above can be someone talking to themselves, or three or four in a huddle of excitement: "This looks strange ... did I miss equally strange tracks earlier ... should I look further ...?"

Without further ado, I list some topics that may be of interest to my participants. I list them with odd hints to the importance that I detect. You may come up with a quite different angle: such is the character of good searchings. What we are aiming at is a set of reports, but the reports are aimed at going to the next group in the cycle of collaboration. To give concrete bent to the efforts, I mention that the reports should be between one and four pages. Problems, of course, will bubble up in the process: "to what am I pointing? For example, am I not pointing to a gap in doctrines, or a flaw in communications?" This certainly will be true. What the seminar does is help us all to stumble round towards finding that, yes, some research-discovery points to the need for a shift of perspective in another specialty or beyond the specialty in another field of inquiry or in common sense. But in mature collaboration it is to do so within a system, a system moreover which eventually is to be an omnidisciplinary global system of collaboration in the genesis of better human survival.¹³ Is the later large point relevant? I recall now my strategy of exactly fifty years ago, when I was teaching mathematical physics at both undergraduate and graduate levels. The group struggled, nudged by me, with the grim exercises and details, but every now and then, I pointed to the heights, took their eyes off the mud to sniff the winds of change and peek at the peak. We need that sense of the distant harmony, and of seeding the solution to "the problem of general history, which is the real catch."¹⁴

What I envisage is a series of exchanges between the seminar master

Provincial for intelligent collaboration. The letter is reproduced fully in Pierrot Lambert and Philip McShane, *Bernard Lonergan. His Life and Leading Ideas*, (Axial Publishing, 2010), 144-154.

¹³ This is an enormously complex heuristic, which can only be effective if held together by an integral set of diagrams. *Prehumous 2*, "Metaphysical Words" gives the start of such a set. *Cantower 8*, "Slopes: An Encounter" talks of slopes in different disciplines (section 1.4) and gives a diagram in that section, but the omnidisciplinary diagram is to be much more complex, indeed a global geohistorical imaging would be beneficial. Whatever the complexity of slopes, the product of the third stage of meaning is to be a dominant unity of foundational persons, expressed in the convergence of all slopes at the fourth level of collaboration.

¹⁴ *CWL* 10, 236.

and each participant. There needs to be recognized - but slowly - the manner in which two problems intertwine. There is the problem of the participant not having the standard model that was the achievement of Lonergan's life. Secondly, there is the problem of discovering that the specialty, any specialty, requires the slow genesis of a differentiation of consciousness and of expression that leads to a sentence-by-sentence control of the talk, a control of meaning that is initially quite foreign to the practitioner in the present culture.

2 *The List of Possible Projects:*

I note that the list, 12 topics, is in no particular order, and it is obviously open-ended. It may well remind a reader of a similar list in the Lonergan biography,¹⁵ which was written by me in no particular order, and indeed I recommend that list as a source of searching for what might be your topic for functional research. Of course, the data of your research for your focus of interest is the *Collected Works* of Lonergan. You may well come up with something that turns out to be the key to the *Whole Earth Discipline: An Ecopragmatic Manifesto*.¹⁶

1. "...proceeds from an interpreter that grasps the universal viewpoint and ... addressed to an audience that similarly grasps the universal viewpoint" (*CWL* 3, 602). Is this not somehow universally true of human talk, even of kindergarten talk? And is there not the seed of functional collaboration here?

2. "Man tends to center an infinite craving on a finite object" ("Finality, Love, Marriage," in *Collection*, *CWL* 4, 49). Does not the article lead, especially in its concluding searchings, towards a liberation of all varieties of sexuality that lifts the craving for the finite object into the infinite global dynamic?

3 Linguistic feedback, mentioned in note 34, *Method in Theology*, 88 and later on page 93 [missing in *Method* as printed]: line 12 "... linguistic **feed-back is achieved, that is in the measure that** explanations ...". Does this point to a core shift of language and symbol to be sought in the next millennium?

4. Implementation as a component of metaphysics. Is this

¹⁵ There is a list of forty topics on pages 170-171 of the work cited in note 12 above.

¹⁶ Stewart Brand, *Whole Earth Discipline: Why Dense Cities, Nuclear Power, Transgenic Crops, Restored Wildlands, and Geoengineering Are Necessary* (Atlantic Books, 2010).

meaning (a neglected zone of indexing in *Insight*) complexified and differentiated by functional collaboration?

5. The “position” of *Insight* (CWL 3), page 413 makes no mention of intentionality. Is the statement here a simplified pedagogic statement, in various ways incomplete?

6. “The principle of the *level floor* will have to be accepted, developed, and put into effect.” (*For A New Political Economy*, CWL 21, 93). Is this a radical suggestion, beyond present economics, undeveloped in Lonergan?

7.” Transition to Exchange Economy” (title of chapter three of *For a New Political Economy*). Is the meaning of **transition** here undeveloped in the Lonergan of 1941, awaiting a transposition that would lift it to a later historical transition, in the third stage of meaning, of the Hebrew and New Testament covenant leading to a global meaning of a covenant of money as promised “land”? Do we have here the radical long-term solution to the problem of derivative financing?

8. *Method in Theology*'s complete failure regarding functional history needs a sublation of *Insight* (CWL 3), chapter 17.

9. “The pure desire to know is ineffable” (Thesis 12 of *The Incarnate Word*, CWL 8, 573ff). Does this solve the central problem of *De Ente Supernaturali*? (CWL 19, Part 2, 53-256)

10. The second edition of *Insight* changes the meaning of empirical probability. Is this of broader empirical significance?

11. “There have to be invented appropriate symbolic images of the relevant chemical and physical processes” (*Insight*, CWL 3, 489). What are the dynamics and value of this invention?

12. *De Intellectu et Methodo*, 55 (Shield's Translation, CWL 23, 31ff. and *Understanding and Being*, CWL 5, 130-132) have significant comments on the genetic systematics of systems in mathematics. Does this have broader functional significance?