

## The Ontological Structure of the Hermeneutic Circle

Clayton Shoppa and William Zanardi

### Introduction (William Zanardi)

In his recent review of a book by Fred Lawrence, Jeremy Wilkins remarked that the author left undeveloped his claim that Lonergan's functional specialties "thematize the ontological structure of the hermeneutic circle."<sup>1</sup> Why, he asked, did the author offer no further commentary on his claim? This essay is our experiment in filling in some of what was left unstated. It is also another exercise in doing the three objectifications Lonergan included as final steps in the fourth functional specialty of dialectic.

There is, of course, a ready excuse for the absence of further commentary in Lawrence's book. No one should expect an author to follow up every claim in a book with extensive analysis of its presuppositions and implications. In addition, the claim under scrutiny leads to all sorts of questions requiring at least several books to explore. In subsequent pages we will identify some of those questions and indicate their complexity. We will be suggesting what those further questions may be and laying out how, if the goal is explanatory understanding, one might anticipate answering them. For now, our initial focus is on three questions: What is usually meant by the "hermeneutic circle"? What is its "ontological structure"? How do the functional specialties make that structure explicit?

The hermeneutic circle became a topic of philosophical inquiry largely because of its appearance in arguments within the history of modern epistemology. Richard Rorty suggested those arguments revealed a parasitical relation between academic skepticism and modern epistemology. In one argument the skeptic cited the dependency of all current understanding on what preceded it. Thus, any inquirer began with a historical-cultural perspective that sets limits on acceptable assumptions and linguistic expressions. Those limits largely confined any subsequent inquiry to an inherited worldview and its conventional modes of expression.<sup>2</sup> While poets

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<sup>1</sup> Review of Lawrence's *The Fragility of Conversation: Consciousness and Self-Understanding in Post/Modern Culture*, in *The Heythrop Journal*, Vol. LIX (2018), 845.

<sup>2</sup> A common example of such confinement is the Cartesian problematic of how conscious subjects can get beyond their own minds to know what is objectively

might occasionally break “the crust of convention,” serious thinkers usually begin with traditional problems and the formulations of their predecessors. The task of modern epistemologists was to rescue their tradition from the assaults of the skeptic; hence, the latter’s reading of the hermeneutic circle became a source of contention.

We do not want to review this old series of debates. We think they go nowhere so long as the participants ignore their own intentional operations that generate whatever understanding they do attain. But some attention to those operations is what this essay presupposes in its writers and readers, and the implications of what follows from such self-attention are the basis for our answers to the three questions above.

### **First Objectification and Second Objectifications**

#### A. Clayton Shoppa

#### **First Objectification**

Wilkins flags an underdeveloped sentence from Lawrence’s book. The sentence contends that functional specialties show the hermeneutic circle’s ontological structure. Wilkins is right that Lawrence does not say much more to justify the claim, but it is complex and provocative enough for me to wonder about it, to draw it out, to understand and perhaps to verify it, to supply what Wilkins finds missing. To reword the sentence a bit: the hermeneutic circle is (1) organized by ontology and (2) revealed by functional specialties. The specialties let us see under the hood of the circle. In part the claim is dense because it draws from traditions and concepts usually kept at arm’s length from one another: the study of interpretation, the study of basic reality, Lonergan’s breakthrough to and prescription of a way forward through theology’s thorniest debates, and, not least, Lawrence’s own understanding of all of these. In this first objectification I begin with a somewhat standard review of the history of hermeneutics before shifting the focus to an emerging understanding of my own intentional performance.

Schleiermacher gives us the contemporary sense of hermeneutics as a field of specialized inquiry. Some philosophers are ethicists, others epistemologists, but those who study interpretation practice hermeneutics. It is unsurprising that its most successful practitioners saw their burgeoning

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real. Latent assumptions and the original wording of the problematic endured and blocked its resolution. How Lonergan evaded both forms of blockage is briefly and brilliantly stated in *Insight*, CWL 3, 401.

field as necessarily interdisciplinary. Human meaning is complex, so the comprehensive integration of it was seen to need multiple advanced competencies in philology, archeology, art history, and economics, among others.

When we interpret, say, a painting, we bring any number of resources to bear in a synthetic way. The painting provokes memories; it suggests techniques; it can be dated to such-and-such an age; its subject matter or lack thereof connotes important works by other artists; its artist trained with so-and-so; it was a late work or an early work, a deathbed work or a first work; it sold at auction for a pittance or a princely sum; it remains unstudied and unknown to other critics or famous to the point of cliché, such that few have eyes fresh enough to see it for what it is. Appraising the painting's merits, the critic mediates data from many sources, intrinsically from the painting but also extrinsically from its social-historical context and the critic's own biography.

Today doing hermeneutics mostly means studying written works instead of any and all meaningful artifacts. In previous centuries it was a term invoked as a subspecialty, first among Protestants and later by Catholics, in the academic study of scripture. Hermeneutics studies what goes into an interpretation. What factors are relevant? What conditions are useful? What has been overlooked? What did the artist, actor, or author intend? Schleiermacher's biographer Dilthey used hermeneutics to denote the study of the human sciences, history in particular. Because the field emerges out of one set of puzzles only to shift elsewhere, it is best to be cautious about generalizing about its tools and methods, and the promise of their results.

But one thing is certain. Hermeneutics has come to connote a high-level recursive study. After all, as many of its practitioners have pointed out, we interpret often. Thus, interpretations are themselves the kinds of things hermeneutics, as the study of interpretation, ought to study. When a practitioner attempts to justify the interpretation of a text, he or she cannot help but draw from other interpretations. And the practitioner leaves behind materials from which others can draw. To become comprehensive, hermeneutics had to become critical.

This is how hermeneutics came to discover its most defining figure, the circle. In logic an argument is said to be circular when its conclusion restates one or more of its premises. Circular arguments are defective because they do not get us anywhere. We end up where we started. Schleiermacher acknowledges, though, that circular arguments are not always poorly constructed. In some cases, the circle is desirable. What began as a supplement to the empirical study of biblical history, for example, becomes

increasingly rarified until what emerges is an a priori discovery of some consequence. As Schleiermacher puts it, a whole can be understood only with reference to an individual, and, in the other direction, an individual can only be understood in reference to the whole.

The point is not altogether abstract. Nor is it altogether unfamiliar. Players and the sport they play are a good example of the hermeneutic circle. The game as a whole gives structure to its players; there is no accounting for players' actions on the field without general knowledge of the game and its rules. Competition, hermeneutically speaking, is a form of cooperation. Were they deprived of relevant prior insights into gameplay, once-expert players would appear forlorn and confused. Professional athletes train and experiment with new techniques. Specialized coaches track what works, that is, which strategies yield competitive advantages and which yield poor results and ought to be set aside. These partial experiments contribute to the sport as a whole, adding to what it means, contributing to its history, supplying opportunities for further refinement by other players, coaches, teams, and leagues, and so the circle turns. Neither players nor the game they play floats freely; each implies the other. An interpretation draws from what it at the same time supplies.

The ontological specification of the foregoing takes the same structure and locates it at a more elemental level. Credit is due to Schleiermacher as a pioneering authority. Credit is due to Rorty for spotting the contemporary application. But I expect Lawrence intends to single out Heidegger. In *Being and Time* Heidegger analyzes Dasein in terms of care and care in terms of time. Of all the entities that exist, Dasein is the one, the only one, that asks about its being, which makes being an issue. It is the being which is in each case a person. Though the book's language is intolerably strained, testing the patience of its most dedicated readers, its stakes are thoroughly personal.

Heidegger frames the hermeneutic circle, the circle of meaning, as a circle within understanding and thus as an unavoidable fixture of our being. He writes: "The 'circle' in understanding belongs to the structure of meaning, and the latter phenomenon is rooted in the existential constitution of Dasein—that is, in the understanding which interprets. An entity for which, as Being-in-the-world, its being is itself an issue, has, ontologically, a circular structure."<sup>3</sup> Despite the difficult language, is it possible for me to locate what these other authorities have described in my own being and doing, in my own living? The preceding account will remain at the level of description

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<sup>3</sup> *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 195.

until its key steps are pegged to intentional operations. Without doing so, we are left to imagine lonely scholars poring over tomes and arguments conforming to imagined shapes. In other words, it is one thing to describe the hermeneutic circle. It is another to explain it in personal or existential terms.

The circle is not the obscure province of academic specialists. It is the habitat of understanding. But acts of understanding are cognitional operations that occur and recur given the satisfaction of certain conditions. Cartoonists might symbolize these acts using exclamation marks or switched-on light bulbs. These representations, however, are too derivative and may contribute to a conceptualist misunderstanding of what is, by its nature, something far more personal. The fact is that I do have memories of experiences of changing my own mind. My biography does not repeat, at least not entirely. It involves creative departures, swerves, lifts, and, yes, speed bumps. Not all changes yield progressive results. A full theory of normative judgment that could distinguish good sense from nonsense is too far off my present focus. But development is possible and real. Some adults do put aside childish things.

Experience is mediated by insights. This means that insights only occur by drawing on experiences, whether sights, sounds, memories, daydreams, to occur. But insights are not the same thing as experiences. I hope I am not alone when I so easily remember times at which, after reading a paragraph or page, I realize I have understood very little. Just because I experienced the marks on the pages of a book does not mean I made sense of them. Next, to install the loop, insights set the stage for new, more organized experiences. When we watch a baseball game together, one of my friends can identify what kind of pitch is thrown, whether fastball, curveball, or whatever others the pitcher can manage, whereas I have to rely on the TV announcer for these details. Someday I hope to understand what he already does. That understanding will enrich what I see.

The hermeneutic circle formulates a map about how inferences work. It is the result of insight into insight. It draws from what it supplies. In one descending half of the circle, we use what we have learned to act in ways that conform intrinsically to what we know to be true, good, and worthwhile. But in the everyday world of practice, we do not merely rehearse what we have already learned. We can also improve what we understand and do. The work of understanding and deciding is conducted by questions, and questions are not kept present-to-hand, as Heidegger would say, at least not for long. They impinge on us. They bother us. German philosophers in the preceding centuries refer to *facticity*, by which they meant the deeply contingent character of the conditions of intelligibility. Lonergan uses the phrase

*empirical residue* in much the same way. Sometimes, when many extrinsic conditions are just right, we meet our questions with plausible answers. We learn more and thus contribute to the ascending half of the circle, adding to the meaningful experience of our lives not as actors handed a script to assume roles but as authentic participants in the ongoing pursuit of more understanding and better deciding. Though its conditions are shifting and at times unpredictable, reaching for understanding is something we can do purposefully and more successfully via methodological control. We use intelligence to become more intelligent. Creativity accelerates.

Lawrence claims that Lonergan's breakthrough to functional specialization is compatible with the ontological structure of the hermeneutic circle. Granted, much about the eight specializations remains unknown because so few have taken up the challenge. Conventional academic practice remains a major obstacle to testing a new method of scholarship. Lawrence's sentence expresses the judgment of its author that the specializations cut with rather than against the grain of understanding.

Perhaps few citations of the hermeneutic circle from the histories of philosophy and theology reach the threshold of explanation. Rendering its structure explicit and then connecting the results to intentional operations set within the context of functional specialization are steps in crossing this threshold.

Wilkins is right that the sentence is underdeveloped. But the full justification requires more than *Method in Theology*. The full justification is the implementation of the method much as writing a grocery list is no substitute for doing the shopping. As an explanatory structure, the circle confirms that ontological statements are empirically verifiable. The founding insight of ontology is that I am an instance of what I study. When Lonergan writes about metaphysics as a science of proportionate being, this is what he means. The study of basic reality is, or ought to be, verifiable by human knowers, of which I am one.

The circle is compatible with intellectual conversion. Insights set the stage for more of the same. The first objectification is supposed to parse a controversy to favor positions and disfavor counterpositions. It is a subordinate step in dialectics, much as dialectics is a subordinate step in functional specialization. To the extent that the disputed question here regards the hermeneutic circle's ontological structure and whether or not functional specialization is compatible with this structure, the foregoing is a high-level demonstration to affirm what Lawrence wrote.

## Second Objectification

The second objectification develops the promise of the first. Since the statement under review here regards the value of the functional specialties, it follows that the second objectification will take a stand on their value. At a high-level of generality, Lonergan's method is a challenge, a gauntlet. Functional specialization introduces and sustains the large-scale recycling of state-of-the-art scholarship to promote the economy of teaching and learning. Specialists participate in the universe they study, so self-knowledge will accrue too.

It happens that many of the intellectual commitments that organize contemporary philosophy will not live up to this standard. Skepticism, however attenuated, elaborated, or sophisticated, is an example of one such faulty view. Misconstrued to illustrate the futility of insights, the hermeneutic circle becomes a diagram for inquiry's fruitlessness.

The present work using objectifications takes a shortcut through this longstanding academic debate. Each objectification implements methodical controls over critical interpretation. The first makes basic assumptions about a topic explicit, refusing to let such assumptions hide in the background of a debate. The second circulates personally formulated stances among others doing the exercise. The third invites partners to respond likewise. Though the objectifications' results cannot be guaranteed in advance, though the reversal of counterpositions cannot run on autopilot, the process does make the sources of some differences explicit. It brings them out into daylight. When the long-running alternative is endless debates framed and even controlled by hidden assumptions, I judge the experiment worth pursuing.

What of the view that would result? What would philosophy and theology look like today if skepticism were more confined to history? Practitioners would acknowledge the animating work of questions and answers. I think it could transform the posture of contemporary scholarship. If experts were celebrated rather than chided, if people searched for opportunities to learn more, it could help the life of the mind move from society's periphery to its center. Nevertheless, the fact is that functional specialties fall outside of conventional academic practice. Experiments are underway. I can affirm Lawrence's judgment but moderate his statement a bit. If the proof is in the doing, his claim about the specialties remains a hypothetical judgment, one I hope the future will bear out.

## B. William Zanardi

### **First Objectification**

So what experience do I have with new questions eroding my prior acceptance of inherited answers? I have found numerous accounts of other people's experiences of departures from their traditions. Historical surveys of physics, chemistry and medicine record departures from what once were conventional views. As a case in point, recurrent in those histories is the shift from descriptive understanding to explanatory understanding. To the degree that I have tracked this shift and appreciated its significance, I have experienced an erosion of my earlier dependence on and confidence in the reliability of common sense for answering any question worth asking. In short, my reading of intellectual history and some questions it evoked have shown me that descriptive understanding is insufficient. Thus, examples of departures from what once were conventional views and modes of expression seem to be advances in understanding.

Now the question of whether such departures are always instances of intellectual development and progress in understanding is not one of the three focus questions of this essay. Instead, the examples of departures serve to introduce the conjecture that questioning has something to do with "the ontological structure of the hermeneutic circle." What might that be? First, I think it not much of a stretch to generalize that questioning is a principle of indeterminacy within my own thinking. If I cannot anticipate all the questions that may occur to me tomorrow, how do I know they might not unsettle what I am thinking today? To generalize descriptively, questioning seems to be a source of movement, of unrest, of disruption of prior thinking.

This paltry beginning is one clue to the meaning of "ontological structure." As an inquirer my intending of anything whatsoever seems governed by opposed but related demands for motion and rest. That is, my questioning seeks answers that I do not yet possess, but once I possess them I tend to shift from active puzzling to affirming that I have found what I am looking for and so am temporarily at rest. However, outside of trivial matters (Where did I leave my keys? When is my next doctor's appointment?), my experience is that further questions pose new problems that previous answers do not handle well. This was true of my learning about the limits of descriptive answers to questions. For example, am I making any progress by saying that sweat is perspiration or that money is a medium of economic exchange? I may have "rested" with such answers once, but further questions disrupted my sleep.

What about the objects of my intending? How are they subject to related but opposed demands for motion and rest? Evolutionary history provides examples of motion. The growth of plants and animals from initial states to mature states exemplifies both motion and rest. But these common observations lead to further questions about motion, development and maturation, ones that begin with descriptive examples but push on toward explanations. For example, tracking the history of medical practices and their underlying theories reveals efforts to achieve explanatory understanding. Some success in those efforts is not controversial. Even in non-technical areas of human living, most people can summon up from memory experiences of a “before” and an “after.” That is, they can recall how they once believed something but later changed their minds for the better. As well, they have witnessed the growth of their own children or have observed the slow motions of caterpillars becoming the flight of butterflies.

So far I have been describing only a first approximation to what I understand about “ontological structure.” On the side of the intending subject, there are experiences of motion and rest. On the side of the intended object, given a sufficient historical perspective, there is evidence of motion and rest. It seems plausible to claim that what something is includes what it may yet become.<sup>4</sup> This generalization applies to the intending subject, the intended object and the first approximation.

So what moves me along toward a second approximation? Suppose I raise further questions about the preconditions to raising questions. Let me take a shortcut by leaping ahead to a diagram that sketches some of those preconditions. The following is my modification of a diagram appearing in several of Philip McShane’s works.<sup>5</sup>

$$H_3 \{H_2 [H_1 S(p_i; c_j; b_k; \text{psy}_l; i_m; r_n)]\}$$

The three H’s symbolize the tri-partite historical context of any inquirer’s life. The lowercase letters are symbols for physical, chemical, biological, psychological, intellectual and rational antecedents to questioning, while the subscripts represent the diverse variables belonging to each general type of

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<sup>4</sup> The claim is consistent with another: “Being intelligent includes a grasp of hitherto unnoticed or unrealized possibilities.” CWL 14, *Method in Theology*, 52.

<sup>5</sup> The original diagram  $H S \dagger (p_i, c_j, b_k, z_l, u_m, r_n)$  appears in the Epilogue of *Wealth of Self and Wealth of Nations* (New York: Exposition Press, 1975), p. 106.

antecedent.<sup>6</sup> How many will take note of the semicolons and wonder about their significance?

I place this diagram here to point out both the complexity of the preconditions to raising questions and the massive research projects that scientists need to undertake to explain what I so easily called a “principle of indeterminacy” or of motion. The first approximation may have seemed plausible, but does it now seem wholly inadequate? For example, what patterns of neuropsychological variables predispose some persons to be quite adept at fantasizing about unconventional ways of speaking and thinking? In contrast, what patterns tend to predispose others to resist departures from familiar conventions? Will the former tend to have far more questions than the latter?

As an example of variable antecedents producing differences in human thinking and acting, consider the human autonomic nervous system and its responses to perceived threats. The range of responses varies widely as evidenced in those suffering from PTSD because of either early childhood trauma or later experiences of violence. The excitatory phase with its chemical releases heightens alertness to perceived dangers. Ordinarily once actual threats have ended, an inhibitory phase of a subsystem suppresses the earlier chemical releases and returns the whole system to a normal state of alertness. However, because of antecedent traumatic conditions, the return may not occur, and disproportionate responses to even minor inconveniences produce the seemingly irrational behavior of road rage, violent outbursts against signs of disrespect, and constant wariness of and muted hostility toward others.

The preceding example supplies data for reading the complex diagram. When anyone is operating descriptively, examples of pavid individuals “afraid of their own shadow” may come to mind and stand in contrast to examples of adventuresome types who seem to thrive on challenges. A further question, then, is how to explain both the extreme contrasts and the range of so-called personality types between them. The diagram anticipates such differences because of the range of possible combinations of antecedent conditions and their variables.

The example of the human alert system serves another purpose, namely, to introduce a question about human development. Under ordinary circumstances the excitatory and inhibitory stages function as a routine cycle responsive to perceived threats. However, disruptions of that cycle can lead

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<sup>6</sup> If this is all too new, for further details see my *Raising Expectations: A Fantasy about Future Developments* (Austin: Forty Acres Press, 2019), 54–61.

to the system malfunctioning and becoming a threat to the very organism it usually protects against obstacles to its survival and further development. All sorts of personally and socially harmful behaviors can follow upon a failure to develop a normally functioning alert system. But what is development? Lonergan offered an answer:

. . . a development may be defined as a flexible, linked sequence of dynamic and increasingly differentiated higher integrations that meet the tension of successively transformed underlying manifolds through successive applications of the principles of correspondence and emergence.<sup>7</sup>

Elsewhere I have commented at length on what I understand about his meaning of development.<sup>8</sup> I introduce this new question because I believe it is significant for understanding the second focus question on the meaning of “ontological structure.” The principles of correspondence and emergence seem to parallel the previous descriptive categories of motion and rest. Now, however, the two principles belong to a theoretical horizon within which Lonergan was pursuing questions about genetic method. Probability theory guided his investigation with the key model of emergence being the event of insight occurring both as a matter of probability and as an integration of less complex data of experience. But how is this model relevant to understanding both human learning and organic development? Another text from *Insight* that intrigued me for years provides a clue.

The higher system of intelligence develops not in a material manifold but in the psychic representation of material manifolds. Hence the higher system of intellectual development is primarily the higher integration, not of the [person] in whom the development occurs, but of the universe that he [or she] inspects.<sup>9</sup>

Today I understand this short passage in the following way. (1) Insights integrate less complex data, e.g. images or psychic representations. (2) Insights also are productive of the appropriate modes of expression for communicating the results of systematic thinking. (3) Those insights and modes of expression mark developments in intending subjects. But (4) for systematic thinking, the “higher integration” is primarily on the side of the intended object. What might this mean?

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<sup>7</sup> CWL 3, *Insight*, 479.

<sup>8</sup> *Rescuing Ethics from Philosophers* (Austin: Forty Acres Press, 2019), 162–168.

<sup>9</sup> CWL 3, *Insight*, 494.

Popular media supply audiences with helpful examples from astrophysics. Sometimes they contain illustrated reports on the chemical composition of gas clouds as the birthplaces of new stars. What the Hubble telescope gathers as data earth-bound computers integrate as pixels, and minds recognize as pictures. Specialized training allows readings of the color shifts detected in the pictures as data revealing the chemicals and chemical reactions comprising the gas clouds and the emerging stars. What an untrained viewer sees are the pictures; what the trained viewer understands is a portion of the universe that is vastly more intelligible and complex than any picture.

This example serves as a clue to what intrigued me about the short passage. It also suggests a second approximation to the meaning of "ontological structure." Minimally I can note both development on the side of the astrophysicists and on the side of the universe they "inspect." To expand on this brief remark would take us back to Lonergan's theoretical meaning of development, but that was not one of the focus questions of this exercise.

The example does introduce the third focus question about the functional specialties making the ontological structure of the hermeneutic circle explicit. Lonergan's discovery was a promising development on the side of inquiring subjects. The eight specialties parallel relations among the distinct types of intentional acts. They form a methodological framework organizing those acts in investigating a universe that is "vastly more intelligible and complex" than any imaginable one. Its reliance on open-ended and collaborative inquiries meets the demand for ongoing development on the side of subjects if they are to approximate the complexity of what they hope to understand. Because the first four specialties aim to retrieve what are the best results from past and present inquiries and because the last four anticipate identifying what ideally will make for progress in understanding and doing, together they reflect the demands of the principles of correspondence and emergence. But my non-skeptical reading of the hermeneutic circle is that it describes how inquiry begins within a range of possible meanings largely assimilated from the past but contains a principle of indeterminacy from which may emerge new questions that may disrupt what previously held sway.

These are my "fillers" for what might have been the unvoiced comments Wilkins expected to find in Lawrence's book. They also are my first objectification or personal statement of what sense I currently make of the latter's explicit claim.

## Second Objectification

I understand the primary aim of the second objectification to be fantasizing about further developments beyond whatever appeared as advanced positions in my first objectification. Recalling two positions mentioned in the preceding pages, I begin by focusing on (1) the anticipated series of research projects leading to an explanatory understanding of the preconditions to thinking and (2) the role of functional specialization in increasing the probability of progress in such projects.

To review the linkage between (1) and (2), I think the view of the ontological structure of the hermeneutic circle (the non-skeptical one compatible with our intending of being) is open in the sense that whatever limited understanding we have to date is subject to principles of indeterminacy and emergence. For both abstract principles the specific operator is the puzzling entity that raises questions.<sup>10</sup> Under ideal conditions, when the desire to understand is unimpeded, questioning proceeds without interference from competing needs and desires. Then progress in understanding what the case is and what new possibilities are worth pursuing is nearly inevitable.<sup>11</sup> Under actual conditions competing desires and variable priorities present a far from ideal situation. This underlines the importance of both the anticipated research projects and functional specialization. The projects will identify the range of combinations of variables favoring or discouraging new questions and insights. The last four specialties will be particularly concerned with reducing the frequency with which interfering variables block progress in understanding and doing better. They will in part aim at liberating thinking from avoidable constraints.<sup>12</sup>

To cite one constraint, one interfering variable—in my reading of contemporary literature in neuropsychology, I find positions and commonly used terminology that assume our intentional acts have their ultimate scientific explanations in organic functions. “Mechanisms in the brain” is unfortunately recurrent as the referent for these reductive explanations. In contrast, functional specialization draws upon the expertise of specialists from diverse fields. They are less likely, then, to privilege either the explanatory power of a single field or its terminology. Ideally, in accepting

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<sup>10</sup> What is an entity that raises questions? To forestall a facile answer, recall the earlier diagram.

<sup>11</sup> CWL 3, *Insight*, 248.

<sup>12</sup> In my third objectification, I will comment on the issue of liberation as left unarticulated in Lonergan’s 1934 view of progress.

emergent probability as key to the intelligibility of the universe, they assume more complex systems integrate less complex ones and so are compatible with the cited diagram and its easily overlooked semicolons. As a result, collaborative studies of antecedent conditions and combinations of variables will not aim at hegemony for any one field but, instead, will exploit multiple fields to account for the emergence and development of complex organisms and their functions. In addition, by cycling and refining the results of their inquiries, those specialists will be mimicking the very processes they are studying. Their intending of being and the objects of their intending will have the same general structure.

Now for large numbers of scientists and scholars to be sufficiently self-attentive to recognize this mimicry would be a great leap in human maturation; hence, this is one element of fantasy. Equally fantastical is to assume they both accept their objective is complete intelligibility and hope their labors will achieve some gradual approximation to that end. But let's suppose they do. Then, operationally they might divide up the labors, first, investigating past and present views of issues and ways of expressing them with a concern for identifying which were the most advanced to date<sup>13</sup> and, second, refining the most advanced views and modes of expression so as to guide improvements in human planning and doing. Contrary to predecessors in an age of ideologies, their hope for retrieving the best and for making history better than it has been will not rest on a claim to already know what our story must be. Instead, suppose they think of their lives and labors as part of "successive stages in a single process of development."<sup>14</sup>

Why do I cite Lonergan's phrase, "successive stages in a single process of development"? Fragments of a philosophy of history may suggest my viewpoint here. First, thinking of myself as a surpassable form of limitation is not too strange. This self-understanding is compatible with a dynamic universe and what I have already cited as an apt maxim for it: "What something is includes what it may yet become." Second, a methodological

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<sup>13</sup> In earlier books I experimented with developmental sequences that would identify best-to-date views. In *A Theory of Ordered Liberty* (2011), my research in the neuroscience of attention identified a front-line view that contributed to my sketch of an explanatory account of liberty. Chapter Five in *What Is an Environment?* (Shoppa and Zanardi, 2015) sequentially ordered various meanings of "environment" in the writings of environmental historians. Chapters Four and Five of *Rescuing Ethics from Philosophers* (2018) provided a developmental sequence of answers to questions about the origins of human aggression.

<sup>14</sup> CWL 14, *Method in Theology*, 125.

stance that “looks back” to identify what was best and “looks ahead” to fantasize about further development fits such a universe and the maxim. Put another way, the Janus-like stance is fitting because our intending of being and the objects of our intending have the same general structure. Third, to envision scholars accepting that the shift from descriptive understanding to explanatory science is a stage of development they need to undergo is to hope that our successors will indeed surpass us. In the midst of our particular successive stage, we can fantasize about what lies ahead and be hopeful that “changes in the control of meaning mark off the great epochs in human history.”<sup>15</sup> From such fantasizing and hope might a new epoch be emerging?

### Third Objectifications

#### A. Clayton Shoppa

In my preceding two objectifications, I have tried to use one circle to make sense of another. The study of interpretation reaches for materials to which it also adds, generating a circle. The implementation of functional specialties will involve numerous hand-offs, likewise recycling between and among participants. Zanardi and I plod through similar terrain. He is clear how insights into intellectual history testify to the value of the horizon of theory and do so in ways that expose the limits of the horizon of common sense. He gives an exposition of the horizon of theory using opposed but related terms, motion and rest. The pair helps connect the interrogative reaches on the side of the subject to the grasp of intelligibilities on the side of the object.

It reminds me of the idea of punctuated equilibrium according to which plant and animal stability gives way to change and differentiation, which in turn gives way back to stability. Indeed, Zanardi evokes astronomical and evolutionary sciences to show the massive scale of his circles. Insights are conditioned by a vast network of prior conditions, including but going well beyond personal psychological states. For these reasons and more, it is no longer credible, no longer compatible with cutting-edge scholarship, to hold a spectator’s view of knowledge.

Zanardi is also upfront about functional specialization as the means to achieve a more mature view. We both judged Lawrence’s claim to be worth affirming. But Zanardi supplies the justification that my own objectifications left sorely implicit: the specializations, he writes, “parallel relations among

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<sup>15</sup> Bernard Lonergan, “Dimensions of Meaning” in *Collection*, vol. 4, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick Crowe and Robert Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 235.

the distinct types of intentional acts." Specialization is not as much about acquiring new skills as it is sharpening what some are already doing. Overturning deficient views will be part of this sharpening, which is why these objectification exercises are important. Collaboration must be sharpened too, for shared inquiry will need to match the ordered complexity of the universe it studies.

#### A. William Zanardi

Ordinarily in a third objectification I first respond to the two objectifications of someone else commenting on a shared issue and then reply to any criticisms of my first two objectifications. However, since Shoppa and I share a similar understanding of the structure of the specialties and of the hermeneutic circle, I deviate here from the usual format. In fact, I raise a new question about the long-established practice in academic circles of reviewing the scholarly work of one of its members. After all, a complaint in a book review was the source of this exercise. So I begin with a question: What is reviewing? If "What something is includes what it may yet become," then, the question is: What might reviewing become?

In searching for an answer, I draw upon both the perspective on our lives as "successive stages in a single process of development" and my second approximation to the ontological structure of the hermeneutic circle; namely, a development on the side of serious inquirers mimics the development of whatever they are studying. Reviewing as self-reviewing, as self-scrutiny, can lead to both the perspective and the structure, but it can also uncover much more. In my case I have been predisposed since my college years to pursue questions about what H3 in the diagram might mean. Over the years I have made a little progress, though mostly by eliminating various inadequate answers. My recent advances are due to McShane's analysis of Lonergan's long-delayed breakthrough in answering a question about the meaning of progress. In 1934 he had a preliminary answer:

It is a matter of intellect. Intellect is understanding of sensible data. It is the guiding form, statistically effective, of human action transforming the sensible data of life. Finally, it is a fresh intellectual synthesis understanding the new situation created by the old intellectual form and providing a statistically effective form for the next cycle of human

action that will bring forth in reality the incompleteness of the later act of intellect by setting new problems.<sup>16</sup>

I encourage you to reread this short passage while recalling the future orientation of the last four functional specialties. By doing both you will detect how Lonergan in 1934 was already looking for a “statistically effective” way of making “a resolute and effective intervention in this historical process.”<sup>17</sup>

Might it have taken Lonergan thirty years to work out another, more complex meaning of “progress”? Unmentioned in his 1934 view was a very practical issue. Raising and answering questions are not independent of historical-cultural situations that carry with them the ill effects of past instances of bias and oversights. So how are those barriers to “effective intervention” to be made explicit, criticized and overcome? You might surmise that the three objectifications are key parts of his answer thirty years later. He was making progress in reviewing his first answer by designing a procedure for “purging” diseased residues that interfered with the pure cycle he described in 1934.

His basic leap was from a much earlier detection of a problem with his 1934 pure cycle of progress to an addition that could effectively counter accumulated nonsense and barriers to progress. Only with that addition could there be a formal science of human progress.

How are the three objectifications key parts of this addition? In response I borrow words from an earlier age. Can doing the three objectifications belong to the “purgative stage” or self-cleansing preliminary to spiritual growth? The first two objectifications can help me shed illusions about what I actually understand and should value. However, by engaging in the third objectification I more directly invite the scrutiny of others and so risk even more disclosures of my illusions. But is this hazarding self-humiliation? Yes, but the result can be further growth in knowing what is true and doing what is good. In traditional terms, it can become the “illuminative stage.”

Note that “reviewing” is beginning to take on a new meaning. Adding self-critical steps or self-revelatory objectifications to the 1934 cycle has implications for any competent reviewing that you or I attempt in the future. If our future work is to be an “effective intervention,” it must be more than a random describing of ongoing stupidities and malice. The popular media

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<sup>16</sup> “Essay in Fundamental Sociology” in Michael Shute, *Lonergan’s Early Economic Research* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 20.

<sup>17</sup> CWL 18, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 306.

have no shortage of such descriptive reports. Instead, we need to have some control over how we detect the origins of obstacles to progress, how we diagnose them and how we propose to correct them. As a pure cycle, the 1934 view of progress describes what ideally will occur, but it omits interfering variables that block needed questions and answers. As amended by the addition of the three final steps of the fourth functional specialty, the more complex cycle includes deliberate and methodical measures to make reviewing more effective in uncovering the missing insights.

To review: I began with the question, What might reviewing become? I followed a clue, namely, McShane's detection of a shift from Lonergan's 1934 meaning of "progress" to a revision that incorporates a strategy for uncovering and countering biases and oversights infecting previous cycles of questioning and answering. Thus, reviewing becomes a series of operations attuned to failures to develop and designed to reverse those failures. Do you detect that such designed operations "thematize the ontological structure of the hermeneutic circle"? Again, deliberate acts on the side of inquirers can mimic the potential for development on the side of the historical process they study.

But are those deliberate operations what I really choose for myself? Effective doing of the three objectifications requires this kind of choice, this kind of orientation to growth, this kind of character. While there is no substitute for personal choice, clarity about what I actually want is basic to self-reviewing. But this re-emphasizes the need for the purgative stage. Are there biases I need to uncover and overcome? Do I resist departing from my customary pre-scientific habits in reviewing? Do I take seriously to heart Lonergan's "difficult and laborious" third way? Honestly, you and I "are not there yet." We are just at the start of a collaborative enterprise that requires all of us to make multiple new beginnings, to depart from comfortable routines.

This enterprise was the leap Lonergan made to the future of reviewing. But widespread acceptance of especially the self-revelatory component will not come quickly or easily. The three objectifications are not a matter of hurling insults, as happens in scholarly and scientific debates, but of expecting and receiving responses that are others' best guesses as ways toward further illumination. Might reviewing slowly become a conventional practice of scientifically replying to others so as to refine and apply what collaborators take to be the most advanced views to date?

But who is willing to start over and to take on this "difficult and laborious" challenge with uncertain results? Some adventuresome types are usually around and willing to depart from current practices. Elsewhere I have

written that the likely candidates will already be disenchanted with conventional procedures and results in their fields. I likened my own academic discipline of philosophy to a fashion industry meeting demands for novelties but not demands for improving our story. I expect that it and other academic disciplines can do far better, but the proof will lie in the doing. To attempt experiments with the three objectifications is a plausible place to start over. Are you up to the challenge?

### Afterword (Philip McShane)

The oddity of my solo run in this exercise would seem to cut out the communal aspect of this third objectification. A great deal of weaving round the problem eventually fermented into a fantasy, a fantasy that brings me right back to the first paragraph of my reflections, back to the remark “that Lonergan’s functional specialties thematize the ontological structure of the hermeneutic circle.”<sup>18</sup>

Bear with my strange fantasy, which is geared to shake up your efforts and mine to view, with extraordinary freshness, reviewing in all its rambling aspects.

We begin with a viewing of Lonergan thematizing the ontological structure of the hermeneutic circle in 1934. Might we recognize what he did in his brief and dense description?

But what is Progress?

It is a matter of intellect. Intellect is understanding of sensible data. It is the guiding form, statistically effective, of human action transforming the sensible data of life. Finally, it is a fresh intellectual synthesis understanding the new situation created by the old intellectual form and providing a statistically effective form for the next cycle of human action that will bring forth in reality the incompleteness of the later act of intellect by setting new problems.<sup>19</sup>

Is there a little shock in sensing that he is focusing his effort on a circle that shakes up the meaning of hermeneutics into the lean-forward enterprise of “a resolute and effective intervention in this historical process”?<sup>20</sup>

But—yes, this is the fantasy—let us hear Lonergan himself viewing and reviewing the road forward from that description of 1934 fifty years later in 1984, in some strange moments of self-appreciation in his final home in Pickering.

It saddens me to see my disciples missing two major pushes of mine towards an intervention in history “too effective to be ignored.”<sup>21</sup> Especially since neither really required the subtleties of functionally

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<sup>18</sup> Review of Lawrence’s *The Fragility of Conversation: Consciousness and Self-Understanding in Post/Modern Culture*, in *The Heythrop Journal*, Vol. LIX (2018), 845.

<sup>19</sup> “Essay in Fundamental Sociology” in Michael Shute, *Lonergan’s Early Economic Research* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 20.

<sup>20</sup> CWL 18, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 306.

<sup>21</sup> CWL 3, *Insight*, 263.

divided work. My disciples missed the pointing to a genetic control of evolving history, summarily expressed in the second paragraph of the second canon of hermeneutics. Instead they putter along ineffectively in the manner described on the top of page 604 of the book. Secondly, they miss, indeed, avoid the brilliant and discontinuous shift in the meaning of dialectic that is incompletely given in section 5 of *Method* 10.

Surely that darkness will be removed from my followers' minds in the next fifty years?

Would it help to claim that there was a darkness in my own mind fifty years ago, when, with a thirty-year-old's energy and enthusiasm I came up with the identification of progress that was powerfully genetic, reflectively statistical, but missing a formal scientific completeness? What is that missing element, and what do I mean now by formal completeness? I think now of some of my optimistic foolishness when, in crazy solitude, I wrote such nonsense in *Insight* as "the answer is easily reached."<sup>22</sup> It took me more than three decades to reach the beginnings of an answer to the full problem, an answer both to the informal mess in the science of progress identified by Kuhn, and to the corrupting mess layered into human progress by human depravity.

But now I look back on that *Essay in Fundamental Sociology* and see how obvious the leap is towards both formal scientific completeness—there is a Gödelian incompleteness—and effective moral weaving into a graceful finitude.

The basic leap is and was to see, with some scientific or engineering suspicion, that the entire essay "outside" that 1934 identification of progress, with its random tour of ongoing stupidities and malice, had to be built into the circle if there were to be a full formal science of human progress.

Note that I am now viewing and reviewing, and what such reviewing leads me to is that massive shift of reviewing that is contained in the full asymptotic solution to the "to be built into the circle." I realize now, as I review, how close to the attitude of "the answer is easily reached" that section on "Dialectic: The Structure" is. The shift for me was a great, subtle leap that pointed to an ongoing precision of dialectic in the circle of progress that is to asymptotically pull the genetic dynamics of that 1934 circle into an integral circle of engineering graceful progress.

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<sup>22</sup> CWL 3, *Insight*, 195.

But now I am back with the failure of my disciples in the two zones of genetic control and dialectic twisting of that control. I use the word *twisting* deliberately. The move of "Dialectic: The Structure" is a twisting move, a top-knot in the circle that lifts the muddiness of both Kuhn and "the evil that is concretized in the historical flow"<sup>23</sup> into a dynamic engineering of the question for all of us, confrontationally self-battering in the high concluding self-revelations of "Dialectic: The Structure": "Do you know His Kingdom?"<sup>24</sup>

If my disciples could only begin to size up and seize that challenge of solitary self-exposure that was the high point of my stumbling creativity in *Method in Theology*, they would eventually be effectively seized by the need to stop the pattering with the past that is the substance of their "highly specialized monographs":<sup>25</sup> then they would find their way slowly, in these next centuries, to really care for history as our continual shift from stumbling commonsense interventions to an effective science of "theology possesses."<sup>26</sup>

Such is my fantasy of the elder Lonergan's view of reviewing, a lift of all such reviewing into an increasingly subtle knot in the 1934 circle, a first little twist of which is the challenge of attempting what he asks us quite plainly to do in "Dialectic: The Structure."

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<sup>23</sup> Shute, *Lonergan's Early Economic Research*, 43.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> CWL 3, *Insight*, 604.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 766. I would note the vague normativity of my comments on this possession in the pages that follow in *Insight*. The pressures of Jesuit obedience contracted and cut off my efforts here, and I never again rose to the drive of those early years in the 1950s. Still, there is one rising that is of consequence that occurred, as it happens, in the year of the publication of *Insight*. I refer to the 1957 lectures in Boston on logic and existentialism. There I was thinking indeed of a lift of logic both into its own genetics and into the knots of histories rescues. Perhaps those lectures will shake my followers into seeing history as, literally, a study of the future, and a full logic as a structure of thinking morally "too effective to be ignored." CWL 3, *Insight*, 263.

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