

Effective Dialectical Analysis: Chapter 5, *Method in Theology*

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A first objectification – my road to chapter 5, *Method in Theology*

My early encounters with Method in Theology

I was first introduced to *Insight* and Bernard Lonergan in the early 1970s by Tony Kelly (an Australian theologian and Redemptorist priest). I found something deeply challenging and attractive in Lonergan's writings. For me Lonergan posed, and continues to pose, a personal challenge, a challenge to authenticity and a challenge to deal with things at a deeper level. My attraction stemmed from his critical appreciation of all serious thinkers and from the way in which he dealt with differing viewpoints. He was not content with the way of recognising and tolerating conflicts and differences, nor with the way of forceful and fearful rejection and opposition to alternative views. Such conflicts and differences raised key unresolved questions for him personally. His *modus operandi* was one of integration. He took varying and conflicting viewpoints and reached for a new higher viewpoint, one which integrated the contribution of other viewpoints, and one which sorted out and appreciated their contribution while recognising their limitations.

My first encounter with *Method in Theology* was in the late 1970s. As part of degree in theology at Yarra Theological Union in Melbourne, I took a subject run by Tony Kelly on *Method in Theology*. I don't remember much of this course – I think most of it was over-my-head – but I did come away with an understanding that there were different types of functional specialties.

In the mid-to-late 1970s, as part of Bachelor of Arts degree, I took subjects in sociology, economics, and philosophy. I spent a lot of my time trying to relate the material in these subjects to *Insight's* chapters 6 and 7. A formative influence here was Gibson Winter's *Elements for a Social Ethic: Scientific Perspectives on Social Process* (Winter 1966) in which he analyses four conflicting social theories, goes to the root of their difference and recognises their limitations but also their strengths. His explication of the process or method of sociality allows him to relate and ultimately integrate these four conflicting social theories within a higher viewpoint.

Housing advocacy, policy and research

During the 1980s and 1990s, the demands of family and work took me away from working on Lonergan's *Insight* and *Method in Theology*. During this time, I focused on housing advocacy, policy and research.

Over the past 20 years, at the now Centre for Urban Transitions (within Swinburne University of Technology), I have undertaken a range of housing research projects.¹

Housing policy and research, as I inherited it, is deeply steeped in the world of common sense.² The typical research process included:

- (1) Identifying a problem
- (2) Reviewing the relevant literature in order to (i) define the problem more clearly, (ii) determine the gaps in current research, (iii) formulate key research questions, and (iv) work out ways in which research questions could be answered
- (3) Undertaking field research
- (4) Analysing the field research
- (5) Writing up findings and reaching some conclusions
- (6) Making practical recommendations

The focus was on the immediate problems of practitioners and/or particular low-income and disadvantaged groups of people and, the resolution of these problems by making practical recommendations to organisations and/or government. This common-sense approach operates within the taken-for-granted presuppositions of a dominant culture or takes the viewpoint of a minority culture.

¹ See my website, www.artfulhousing.com.au, for these writings on housing.

² This is by no means universal. Some researchers have urged a more self-conscious approach, a recognition that our thinking is shaped by our culture and our socio-economic position. But, while reflexivity enjoins a researcher to reflect critically upon themselves, their values, their motivations, their attitudes etc. and, the impact of these on their results or, to reflect critically upon the way in which they as researchers construct the objects of their research and the frameworks they use, researchers are not encouraged to work out a better more comprehensive framework by integrating the frameworks of other researchers into their own.

The personal struggle towards affirming functional collaboration

Getting up to speed

Soon after coming to Swinburne University of Technology in 2002, I found myself confronted by an array of different types of housing research and by the many debates (at times acrimonious) among researchers. It seemed to me, however, that these debates were often at cross-purposes because the researchers were doing different things. In reaching this conclusion, I was recalling Lonergan's work on functional specialization that I had encountered 20 years previously. Moreover, I found a variety of unconnected methods in housing research. It was also fashionable to introduce new terms or new methods as a way of gaining attention and prominence.

This set me on the path of further exploration of Lonergan's writings, in particular functional specialization. In 2007, I seized an opportunity to undertake a PhD by research and so began more intensive work on functional specialization. Lonergan pointed me to something beyond my current understanding of science. He proffered an invitation. My beginning was simply a matter of belief: that concerted work on Lonergan's writings would take me into a new world, open up new vistas and new horizons. Only now after many years solid work as I 'retrace my steps' can I appreciate that I have reached a point where I'm beginning to understand something of what he is offering.

I began by re-reading *Insight* and *Method in Theology*, as well as Ken Melchin's *History, Ethics, and Emergent Probability*. As I searched around for work on functional specialization, what very little I found was simplistic and narrow, apart from the writings of Phil McShane. I found his writings both challenging and opaque.

On my road to affirming functional collaboration, I found I needed 'to get up to speed'. I shifted backwards and forwards between housing research and the writings of Lonergan and Lonergan scholars, in particular Phil McShane, Ken Melchin, James Sauer, Matthew Lamb and William Mathews. In this process, I recall some inter-related breakthrough moments that slowly threw some light on Lonergan's achievement in *Method in Theology*.

Social science research usually sought efficient causal explanation of events in the motivations and attitudes of social/economic agents, groups or classes. My first breakthrough, which I attribute to reading Ken Melchin (1999) and Philip McShane (2002-2005 passim), was the discovery that an explanation of something (such as housing) grasped the 'functional relations' between the relevant, significant, and essential elements that constituted this something. This grasp left aside those elements that were irrelevant,

insignificant, and incidental. This understanding contrasted markedly with most social science research that I had encountered, particularly economic research. It is these functional relations that mark the uniqueness of what is proposed in chapter 5 of *Method in Theology*. On the one hand, academic disciplines in their current quest for inter-disciplinarity or transdisciplinarity find themselves with ill-defined boundaries and thus, very difficult, if not impossible, to relate functionally to one another. On the other hand, the functional relations of the functional specialties allowed for greater and more sensible collaboration within the academy, 'the powerful technique of scientific collaboration' (Lonergan 1992, 52). At the same time it limited 'one-sided totalitarian ambitions' and 'excessive demands' (Lonergan 2017a, 131).

In the social sciences, much is made of the distinction between fact and value, between descriptive statements and prescriptive statements, and whether 'ought' statements can be derived from 'is' statements. A second breakthrough moment, which I attribute to my reading of Sauer (1995a, 1995b) and Melchin (1994), was the discovery that a theory in the social sciences is a theory of some value. Society is an expression of who we understand ourselves to be. It is constructed through the activities of many individuals and groups who ask questions for deliberation (and intend value), choose something worthwhile (value) and seek to realise that value through sets of activities. This something worthwhile intended includes everything created through human activity such as health and vitality, technologies, economic goods and services, political institutions, common meanings and personal meanings, as well as the structures that facilitate and support them and that constitute an economy, a society, and a culture. It is these values that need to be explained, and they are explained by reference to the set of activities that constitute or bring them about. In prospect, looking forward, this set of activities and their relations is the set of conditions for the occurrence of this value - this set of activities has to occur and to occur in certain relations to constitute or bring about this value. It is normative for the realization of the value. I further realised that it is a theory of value which is carried through the functional specialties with the last four specialties – Foundations, Policies, Systematics and Communications - seeking to realise values and the first four specialties – Research, Interpretation, History and Dialectic – a reflection on and coming to terms with what had been realised. Oddly, it is the structure of the second four functional specialties that 'imposes' a parallel structure on the first four.

A third breakthrough moment, again through reading Philip McShane's writings, was the discovery that a theory answers a what-is-it-question and that a theory of housing is the set of related elements that are relevant,

significant, and essential to the constitution of housing. An explanation is an answer to a what-is-it-question. Rather than descriptive definitions, a what-is-it-question heads for and demands an explanatory definition. This discovery left me with a question: what is the 'what' of which the functional specialties are the relevant, significant and essential elements? Over time, I gradually recognised that the 'what' constituted by the functional specialties was progress. Currently in making progress in any area of human activity we work through the functional specialties, albeit in a confused and erratic manner.

Functional collaboration

I found the foregoing preliminary work an essential beginning for understanding the significance of chapter 5 of *Method in Theology*. But I still had a long way to go in understanding each of the functional specialties, how they related to one another and how together they formed a unity-identity-whole. A long 10+-year process involved a slow unfolding series of personal discoveries. As a housing researcher enmeshed in a common-sense framework, I found reaching some minimal understanding of each functional specialty a major challenge; I found it very difficult to imagine, to fantasize about something that required a fundamental transformation of my thinking and my doing of housing research. It made demands upon both my self-understanding and upon decisions I made as to whom I will become both as a housing researcher and as a person. My challenge throughout this long gestation stemmed from the great difficulty I faced in grasping who I am and what I was doing. I had to come to some understanding of my practices as a housing researcher, then some understanding of what I was doing when I was evaluating them, and finally some understanding of what I was doing when I decided to implement something new.

I have already ready referred above to progress as the unity-identity-whole that brings together the functional specialties. While I could broadly identify genres of housing research that roughly corresponded with the functional specialties, for the most part these genres tried to be all things and included material from other functional specialties. A key challenge was to pinpoint what was central to the genre and separate that from what was additional and peripheral. To relate the functional specialties to one another, I had to adjust (and limit) the way in which I understood housing research, the history of housing, evaluation/critique of housing systems and housing

policies.³ Below are four reflections on how I worked through the role of the functional specialties and their relationship to one another.

First, the role of Interpretation and its relationship with Research. The empirical evidence from Research indicated that different population groups – owners, tenants, women, older people, young people, indigenous, people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities – had different understandings of housing. Different housing systems operated across countries and cultures and housing had a different role in each. Different groups use housing for different purposes and to realise other values and so, understand it differently. What housing is can be distinguished from how it can be used. Notwithstanding, housing has some role, purpose, or function within the constitution of other values. It was important that any heuristic of housing incorporate these variations. A breakthrough moment, sparked off by a discussion with Philip McShane in 2009 supplemented by a Hugo Meynell article (Meynell 1975), was the discovery that a theory of housing is a set of related elements which are variable and admit of a range of possibilities. Other values are constituted by their own sets of related variable elements. The role of housing within the constitution of these other variables may be direct or indirect. Insofar as housing plays a role in some other value, it has a particular type of hierarchical relationship, a lower value to a higher value. In this relationship, the higher value cannot be achieved unless the lower value is achieved. At the same time, the higher value can order or systematize the particularity of the lower values, so the higher value is achieved or better achieved. Through this distinction (between what housing is and its role or purpose in the constitution of other values) we can not only explain what constitutes housing, but we can explain the particular characteristics of an actual operating housing system and thus the variations between housing systems in terms of (i) a set of related variable elements that constitute housing and (ii) a set of other values that order the variable elements in particular ways. (Housing plays a role in the achievement of these other values which will vary by society and culture). Interpretation draws on empirical evidence from Research and integrates the many possible roles of housing into a comprehensive heuristic, a universal viewpoint (Lonergan 1992, chapter 17, Section 3.2) for interpreting any housing system.

Second, I also came to the realisation that the function of history is not simply to document a series of chronological events. Rather like genetic

³ For a more comprehensive outline, see the last chapter of my book, *Making Progress in Housing: A Framework for Collaborative Research* (McNelis 2014), available at: <http://artfulhousing.com.au/making-progress-in-housing>.

method (Loneragan 1992, chapter 15, Section 7), the function of History to work out the vectors (or past Policies) that are moving events forward. These vectors are different from one society to another and change over time. A comprehensive heuristic (of housing) brings together the possible range of vectors that might be operative.

Third, History within different societies and cultures throws up a series of vectors, some complementary and some competing. Underpinning Dialectic is an understanding that fundamental conflicts emerge because people, groups and cultures have different understandings of who we are as persons. In expressing ourselves in the whole of history (Loneragan circa 1965)⁴, in 'retracing our steps', by reflecting upon, understanding and evaluating our history, I learn who I have become and who we have become. There are no definitive *a priori* answers to who-am-I and who-are-we questions. From the great experiment of history (Loneragan 2017b, 170), we have to work out for ourselves as best we can, the best version of the multiple dimensions of ourselves (including in this instance as it is expressed in our housing).

Fourth, discovery in Dialectic is one thing. Deciding to act upon that discovery is another. On Foundations, I discovered that 'conversion' is a fundamental decision that brings about a series of further developments on different levels (Loneragan 2017a, 125). It is not a single once-off development. Conversion sets us on the path to ongoing development. It is how we develop as persons. We learn and come to know through experiencing, understanding and judging. We cannot do so by doing one or other of these, as various other philosophical positions propose. We become authentic persons by choosing what is worthwhile. We cannot do so by choosing what is satisfying, what maintains our current selves, refusing further development. We become fully

⁴ To quote the reference: "As the labor of introspection proceeds, one stumbles on Hegel's insight that the full objectification of the human spirit is the history of the human race. It is in the sum of the products of common sense and common nonsense, of the sciences and the philosophies, of moralities and religions, of social orders and cultural achievements, that there is mediated, set before us in a mirror in which we can behold, the originating principle of human aspiration and human attainment and failure. Still, if that vast panorama is to be explored methodologically, there is the prior need of method; if method is not to be a mere technique arrived at by trial and error, we must first know its grounds; and its grounds reside not in words or statements, not in concepts or judgements, not in experiences or acts of understanding, but in the principles, at once generative, constitutive, and normative of the human spirit in act" (Loneragan circa 1965, 14-15).

alive as being-in-love, by living and loving within the stream of cosmic history. We cannot do so by living within the limited stream of our own personal history. Conversion constitutes the horizon within which we can make progress in all the dimensions of our lives. For me, one of those dimensions is housing.

Concluding comments

By the time I had finished my PhD (with thanks to my supervisors who despite my idiosyncratic ways and, at times, outrageous speculations and conclusions, were generous in their belief that I was pursuing something worthwhile) and published a book based on my dissertation (McNelis 2014), I found I could no longer do housing research as I once had. Rather than taking the normal path of doing a PhD on a particular housing topic, I had reviewed the process of doing housing research and policy and, proposed something completely different. Among my housing research colleagues, I found that it was OK to be critical of the results of housing research and even of the methods used, but they were confounded when I raised questions about what we were doing as housing researchers and asking them to distinguish between different types of questions and different types of research. To them, this seemed I was getting at them and that was just too much.

Notwithstanding, functional collaboration is one of the most important discoveries of the 20th century. It is a new way of understanding and doing science, one which aligns science with progress. It is the way in which we make progress in any area of human endeavour.

Functional collaboration brings order to the diverse and disparate methods used by housing researchers. It distinguishes different types of methodical issues and allows researchers to address them separately (Lonergan 2017a: 135). It brings some balance to the methods utilised: rather than the current obsession with the methods of field research (qualitative and quantitative methods), it brings to the fore the methods of hermeneutics, history, dialectic and foundations as well the relationship between research and implementation. Finally, in the face of persistent calls for interdisciplinary, crossdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches (for example, Bammer 2013; Frodeman, Klein & Pacheco 2017; Klein 2007; Max-Neef 2005), functional collaboration opens up the possibility of an omnidisciplinary approach to housing, overcoming the silos of academic disciplines.

A second objectification – my development of chapter 5

In this second objectification, I want to indicate how functional specialisation can become the standard in social research. One of the difficulties facing functional specialisation is that its significance is neither understood nor is it regarded as something worthwhile pursuing. These are essential if social researchers are to adopt this new form of specialization and give up their current disciplinary framework.

Below I will point to four challenges that I regard as important to the future development and expansion of functional specialisation in social research. A preliminary stage is expanding its scope and some changes in terminology. For social researchers, functional specialisation will begin with the personal task of identifying and distinguishing types of research questions and then, with a re-orientation of their methods. Only then will it be possible to develop a new collaborative research infrastructure.

An expanded scope and changes in terminology

In chapter 5 of *MiT*, the fruit or endpoint of functional specialisation in the FS Communications is 'theology in its external relations'. A further development of functional specialisation involves a double shift in its scope: first, functional specialisation would be understood as relevant to all academic endeavours not just theology (p. 336); second, functional specialisation is not simply relevant to the academy but relevant to making progress in our personal and social lives (Ibid.). In this second shift, the context is personal and social practices in their many dimensions (environmental, technological, economic, political, cultural and religious). Functional specialisation is not only concerned with the writings of previous researchers but also with the practices of communities. FS Research begins with what we are doing and the fruit in FS Communications is doing something better, expressing ourselves better.

As a result of these differences, I would introduce some changes in terminology. Rather than referring to functional specialisation, I would refer to it as Functional Collaboration (FC) to highlight the collaborative nature of functional specialisation. Rather than referring to the sixth FS as Doctrines, I would refer to it as Policies. Where 'Doctrines' tends to be associated with statements and verbal expressions, 'Policies' are associated with decisions about new directions.

Identifying and distinguishing types of research questions

A key element in social research is working out what the key research questions are. So, a focus on questions is one way in which the value of FC can be recognised by social researchers.

Loneragan often refers to questions for intelligence, questions for reflection and questions for deliberation (for example, 35, 100, 116, 228 etc.; 2017b, 166-168). However, while these questions are implicit in the different levels of the functional specialties, in my view, they need further specification: what question is each functional specialty seeking to answer?⁵

By paying attention to the type of questions that spontaneously arise as we go from where we are now to implementing something new, we can distinguish eight types of questions. We can note how some questions presuppose other questions and, in this way, are ordered and related to one another.⁶ These types of questions (with examples from social research) are outlined below - four are concerned with the past, four with the future.

Questions which seek to understand the past are:

- Empirical questions - what are the relevant and significant meaningful events (social practices/activities/processes) in this time and place that constitute a society⁷ and, to what extent are they associated with other events?
- Heuristic/definitional questions - what is a society?
- Historical questions - what is going forward? what are the vectors⁸ that have provoked ongoing change in a society?

⁵ One of the limitations of *MiT* is that, unlike *Insight*, Lonergan doesn't methodically and pedagogically introduce and unfold the background, issues, and foundations of the functional specialties. Instead, given the state of theology at the time, he has to deal with a range of issues to bring theologians 'up-to-speed'.

⁶ For a more extended discussion, see chapter 3 of *Making Progress in Housing: A Framework for Collaborative Research* (McNelis 2014; see also McNelis 2016). This chapter can also be found on my website: <http://artfulhousing.com.au/making-progress-in-housing>.

⁷ Here and below, I use the general term 'society'. But I could also substitute any aspect of society, for example, economy, education, health, housing, cities, neighbourhood.

⁸ Lonergan uses the term 'vector' in relation to the dynamics of progress, decline and redemption (for example, 2013, 83). Here it is being used in a parallel sense as it is by Ken Melchin (Melchin 1991, 1994, 2012) to convey the dynamic aspect of value. As society is constructed by human decisions and actions, these vectors will be fundamental values that have become embedded in society. Indeed,

- Evaluative/critical questions – who have we become? what has been achieved? what are the limitations in this achievement?

Questions which seek to chart the future are:

- Transformative/visionary questions – who do we want to be?
- Policy questions – what vectors will bring about ongoing change in society and achieve our new vision?
- Strategic questions - how do we integrate these vectors within the complex series of systems that constitute an already operating society?
- Practical questions - what events (practices/activities/processes) in this time and place will realize a better operating society?

A social researcher operating within an everyday taken-for-grant world can ask these questions in different ways. They usually mix them up within a single question. But a scientific approach demands precision. An initial personal task is to distinguish these different types of questions and recognise that each question underpins one stage in the process of going from where we are now to implementing something new.

The first four types of questions parallel the second four types of questions. The orientation of the subject shifts from understanding to doing, from puzzlement to aspiration, from being a researcher confronted with their lack of knowledge to being a researcher seeking to implement something new.

These eight questions are a complete ordered set of inter-related questions. There are no other questions. They are an explanatory definition of science locating an understanding of science in “the questioning procedures or praxis of communities of inquirers” (Lamb 1985, 76). These questions can be asked in both the natural sciences and the social sciences. They can be asked of any object.

A re-orientation of methods in social research

It is not enough to distinguish, order and relate these different types of questions. We need to find answers to these questions. Each question anticipates a different type of answer. Each question requires a different method. Each question draws on different data, viz. the results of the previous question in the sequence. So, debates will ensue as to what is the best way in which to answer each type of question. Social researchers will need to reassess their methods. They will be driven to pick out what is essential, significant and relevant in their current methods. No longer will

they are so embedded that they are taken for granted, they are presuppositions for activities within a society.

they be able to exceed their remit by introducing material that does not pertain to a particular method.

The challenge here is re-orient the methods within the various genres of social research. The challenge is twofold: first, to work out what is relevant, significant and essential to the method within each genre that will answer each type of question and form the basis for each functional specialty, and, second, to link each functional specialty with others in such a way that together they form a whole.

A new collaborative research infrastructure

While the current disciplinary framework recognises the complexity of society and deals with this through specialization in academic disciplines and sub-disciplines, it has also fragmented our understanding of society and resulted in one-dimensional 'solutions' to pressing complex issues.

The initial challenges for a social researcher are personal ones: identifying and distinguishing the different types of questions; re-orienting the methods they use in social research. As more social researchers grasp these initial challenges, they can become communal and institutionalised.

Functional Collaboration envisages a decision for social researchers about a new horizon, one which integrates the dynamics of understanding, deciding, and loving with the dynamic of sociality and collaboration, and thus, an ongoing enlarging vision of who we can be. It raises a series of questions that look to the future – a policy question, a strategic question and a practical question.

The policy question: Functional Collaboration begins with a judgment of value, that it is something worthwhile, something better; a technology, a know-how for bringing about ongoing progress. As a group, current social researchers are confronted with a question: Is Functional Collaboration a better way of promoting ongoing progress in society or will we continue to operate on the basis of the current disciplinary framework?

The strategic question: What is the strategy for implementing Functional Collaboration and integrating it into the complex systems of technologies, economics, politics, cultures, and religions that constitute the current approach to social research?

The practical question: How do we re-orient research, expand our capacity to operate, rework our plasticity to develop and master new skills (and unlearn the habits of previous skills), draw on our capacity to co-operate and form new institutional structures in which different groups of

researchers take on the various complementary roles and tasks required for each method?⁹

Some concluding comments

Functional Collaboration is both an explanatory definition of progress and of science. It aligns science with making progress. It defines progress in terms of the significant, relevant and essential elements (the functional specialties) and their relations that constitute or bring about progress. Functional Collaboration takes us from where we are now to implementing something new as a development rather than just a change. It has its foundation in who I am/we are and who I/we want to be (our capacities-for-performance). It is how societies and cultures have developed, though the process has remained unknown and unarticulated until Lonergan's discovery.

This second objectification began with my limited understanding of the import of chapter 5 of *MiT*. I have sought to point to the ways in which Functional Collaboration can be extended and developed beyond the field of theology into social research. To do this, I have in a brief and limited way extended, even altered and adapted, the FSs as outlined in chapter 5 in order to make sense of them in a new context.¹⁰ Over many years, I have made enough slow progress to make a judgement about its value. I still need to do more work on understanding Functional Collaboration and correspondingly work through and integrate the various methods used in social research. I still have a long way to go in grasping Lonergan's vision for the future of humanity!

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⁹ As outlined in Lonergan's structure of the human good (2017a, 47ff)

¹⁰ For a more expansive development of Functional Collaboration in social sciences, see my book *Making Progress in Housing: A Framework for Collaborative Research* (McNelis 2014) which uses housing as a case study.

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Third Objectification

A. Introduction

In this third objectification, we are assembling the first and second objectifications of seven people from different academic backgrounds and different perspectives seeking to make sense of functional specialties within their own disciplines: Terry Quinn – Mathematics; Bruce Anderson – law; James Duffy – philosophy; Paul St. Amour – philosophy; Cyril Orji – theology within an African tradition; Ivo Coelho – theology within an Indian tradition; and, myself – social/housing research.

Each of the contributors spurred my interest – I wanted to know more! So, in doing the third objectification, I have supplemented the first and second objectifications with some of their previous writings.¹¹

The full application of dialectic method (Lonergan 2017:234–235) requires a series of operations on the materials (assemble, complete, reduce, classify and select), distinguish positions and counterpositions and, develop positions and reverse counterpositions. The focus of these operations is the presuppositions of each contributor, in particular presuppositions about knowing, valuing and loving. Such a process, however, is well beyond my competence. So, I have adopted a less burdensome approach to the assembled first and second objectifications. I read and re-read each contribution, where available I read/scanned other writings of the contributors, noted and appreciated some interesting insights from each of the contributors, noted what was common among the various contributors (despite their differing disciplinary backgrounds and interests), and noted some differences between

¹¹ This includes Anderson 1996; Anderson 2010; Anderson 2011; Anderson 2016; Anderson 2022b; Anderson and Shute 2018; Coelho 2000; Coelho 2001; Coelho 2004a; Coelho 2004b; Duffy 2012; Duffy 2015; Duffy 2016; Duffy 2022b; Duffy, Henman et al. 2020; Duffy, Maloney et al. 2020; Orji 2008; Orji 2016; Orji 2022b; Orji 2022c; Quinn 2015; Quinn 2016a; Quinn 2016b; Quinn 2017a; Quinn 2017b; Quinn 2022b; St. Amour 2002; and St. Amour 2005.

my views and that of the contributors. All this in a common-sense mode and passing over the challenges posed by FS Dialectic.

As a result of this, I had to rethink my first and second objectifications. The following is a reprise of these objectifications. Within the reprise of the first objectification, I've included some areas of agreement with my fellow contributors. Within the second objectification I outline two lines of development which highlight some further points of agreement and also some points of disagreement.

B. First objectification: reprise

After reading the first and second objectifications of the contributors, my appreciation of chapter 5 of *Method* shifted.

It became clear to me that the chapter was written for theologians of the 1960s. Thus, its key characteristic is a *descriptive presentation* of functional specialisation (Functional Collaboration (FC)) and the functional specialties (FS).

Neither in chapter 5 nor in the Foreground chapters does Lonergan present an explanatory understanding of FC. However, he does point to some of the characteristics of such an understanding. The grounds of the division are based on two principles: first, two basic phases – understanding the past and looking to the future; second, “that our conscious and intentional operations occur on four distinct levels and that each level has its own proper achievement and end” (128). The need for a new division in which theological activities will be understood “as distinct and separable stages in a single process from data to ultimate results” (130), “to curb one-sided totalitarian ambitions” (131) and “resist excessive demands” (131). An explanatory understanding will be an understanding of FC as a dynamic unity, “a unity of interdependent parts, each adjusting to changes in the others, and the whole developing as a result of such changes and adjustments” (137).

I agreed with much of what the contributors put forward. Throughout there was a belief in Bernard Lonergan and his wisdom summed up in a comment by Terry Quinn, “I was predisposed to trust Lonergan” (Quinn, 111). All the contributors acknowledge the significance of FC and appreciation for the radical development in understanding and doing in human affairs. “... chapter 5 constitutes an objectification of positionality itself, of the operational exigencies of intellectual and moral conversion.” (St. Amour, 139). Both Paul and Terry pointed to the burden of knowing and the hope that this would become a shared burden (Quinn, *passim*; St. Amour, 136–137). This in the face of the “disordered deposit of human meaning accumulated from the past” that “would gradually be reintegrated through

their recurrent collaborative normatively-patterned inquiry” (St. Amour, 143; see also Duffy) and the separation of theory and practice in the history of philosophy (Duffy and St. Amour). The contributors were also actively extending FC beyond theology (Anderson, McNelis, Quinn, and St. Amour).

All were pessimistic about the adoption of FC in the near future, indeed “the possibility of the academy working functionally remains a remote future possibility” (Quinn, 116; see also Duffy) but were optimistic that it will become accepted in the long term (Anderson and Duffy, 67).

C. Second objectification: reprise

This second objectification outlines two lines of development. Both circle around James Duffy’s quote (64) from *Insight*: “Theoretical understanding, then, seeks to solve problems, to erect syntheses, to embrace the universe in a single view” (Lonergan 1992, 442).

The first addresses the presupposition that a descriptive understanding of FC is adequate and pushes us towards an explanatory understanding. The second picks up the challenge posed by Ivo Coelho and Cyril Orji regarding the development of Indian theology and African theology. It proposes that the key issue is the development of a more comprehensive heuristic within FS Interpretation.

1. Towards an explanatory understanding of functional specialisation

For me, the starting point for an explanatory understanding of FC is summed up in the following comment by Ivo: “I would like to think of ... field and subject specializations, as the coincidental aggregate upon which Lonergan’s insight intervenes. As always, the insight is something radically new, and yet it emerges upon a prior set of data that is, without the insight, a merely coincidental aggregate” (Coelho, 45). Or, more precisely, the coincidental aggregate is the methods used in field and subject specialisations. Paul notes the key problem facing field and subject specialization as follows: “There is little understanding of how field and subject specializations are unified” (St. Amour, 137).

From that starting point through a rigorous and critical reflection, an explanatory understanding can proceed in three overlapping and iterative phases.

In the first phase, as many of the contributors noted within their own discipline, we can broadly distinguished different genres of research and the alignment of these with FSs as described by Lonergan in chapter 5 of *Method*. In doing this, we can recognise two things noted by Terry. First, that the “operative presence [of each functional specialty] is mainly inadvertent,

confused, fragmentary and, in many respects, occurs in combinations that are counterproductive” (Quinn, 115). Second, in relation to insight, judgement, feelings, level of consciousness and intellectual conversion that “noticing and describing the occurrence in oneself of various acts ... while a legitimate beginning, is no more *explanatory* than describing plants is explanatory in botany” (Quinn, 112).

The second phase is about getting a better grip on each FS. I begin with the methods used in each genre and work out as best I can what is and what is not specific to each FS. This is an iterative process of moving between the tradition I inherited and an appropriation of what I am doing when I am doing each FS. It is the gradual process of more clearly identifying the differences for myself and becoming more precise about my understanding of each FS. Here attempts at working within one functional specialty (Duffy, 66; Quinn, 114) are particularly important.

A third phase is moving towards a grasp of FSs as “a unity of interdependent parts, each adjusting to changes in the others”. It is seeking a single set of insights which grasps the relationships between FSs and FC as a dynamic unity. One way of doing this is through a more extended discussion of how each FS is sublated by the previous (see St. Amour 2005, 44–47 & 58–62 for a discussion of sublation) which at once pushes us:

- to distinguish each specialty as unique and as constituted by certain operations and their relations and, thus, identifying the basis for the distinction between FSs
- to grasp FSs in relation to one another, and
- to grasp FSs as the elements and relations that together constitute a whole, as a series of successive sublations (St. Amour 2005, 59) directed towards some goal.¹²

As a whole, FC is an explanatory understanding of science and of progress.¹³

¹² My own attempt at moving towards an explanatory understanding of FC is presented in Part III: Functional Collaboration: A unifying framework of *Making Progress in Housing: A Framework of Collaborative Research* (McNelis 2014b). This is available at: <http://artfulhousing.com.au/making-progress-in-housing/>.

¹³ Moreover, within the context of an integrated scale of values which incorporates technological, economic, political, cultural, personal and religious values, Functional Collaboration is the primary form of technology, the know-how that underpins the various types of technology. It is not only the process by which we know how to use natural resources to make goods, but it is also the process by which we know how the human person develops, how to reach agreement with

2. The role of FS Interpretation: developing comprehensive heuristics

Both Cyril and Ivo raise the question of a specifically African and Indian theology. As Cyril notes “the prevailing worldview is the Western world and that the dominant culture undergirding them is the western culture” (Orji, 105). And again: “The horizon of, say church documents or old-style theology, is in many ways different from the African horizon and even in some cases opposed to it” (Orji, 106). In another place, Cyril notes that the centre of Christianity is shifting “away from Europe, southward to Africa and Latin America, and eastward, toward Asia” (Orji 2016, 31). In a similar vein, Ivo notes: “My clearly declared aim was to work out steps for applying Lonergan’s method towards the generation of an Indian Christian theology, or better, to aid the generation of such a theology, which is obviously something that is already in process” (Coelho, 49).¹⁴

My sense is that Cyril and Ivo are proposing that African and Indian theology would run alongside other theologies and operate within their particular culture – Ivo outlines a program which runs Indian theology through all FSs. For me that does not address some key questions about the contribution of African and Indian theologies to the larger theological enterprise, about how we work out whether and to what extent the principles underpinning the history of any faith tradition (whether Western, African or Asian etc.) promote its development. This is an issue for FS Dialectic. But it seems to me there are prior issues on which FS Dialectic depends.

I raise this issue because my sense is that I have a different understanding of FS Interpretation from some other contributors. Their focus is understanding a text and consequently, a different understanding of Functional Collaboration. I, however, would want to extend hermeneutic method beyond texts to a broad range of experiences, expressions and events and, highlight the importance of ‘understanding the object’ (Lonergan 2017,

others, how to organise society (institutions, roles and tasks) and how to reflect on living and develop a culture and a religion. Indeed, it the process for knowing-how we can meet our many and various technological, economic, political, cultural, personal and religious needs, wants and desires and realise them through the values we choose.

¹⁴ The dominance of the Western worldview is not just an issue for theology. I face a similar issue in housing studies, and it emerges in other areas (see for example, Alatas 2002; Ismail 2015; Jal and Bawane 2020; Mignolo 2021; Quijano 2007). In all areas, we also have to consider the perspectives of different faith groups and different population groups (the persecuted and oppressed, refugees, women, young people, LGBTIQ+ etc.).

148–150) in FS Interpretation. FS Interpretation is not just about understanding the meaning of a text. Its role is to develop heuristics for understanding texts and other expressions. Both FS History and FS Dialectic depend upon a comprehensive heuristic, a heuristic which is an answer to a what-is-it question that incorporates into a single view the full range of possible meanings.

“While Aristotle and Hegel had attempted to systematize knowledge, functional specialization does so precisely by systemizing the operations that constitute the dynamic activity of knowing” (St. Amour, 138). In this way, FC is a universal viewpoint, “a potential totality of genetically and dialectically ordered viewpoints” (Lonergan 2017, 587–591; see also Coelho 2001) which anticipates an understanding of the ‘vast panorama’ that is ‘the full objectification of the human spirit’ in ‘the history of the human race’ (Lonergan 1965).

Functional Collaboration is an integrated heuristic structure that provides a first context for developing our understanding in any area of human endeavour.¹⁵ It is a fundamental starting point. But more is needed.

“Functional specialization is an integration both of the ongoing dynamic process of knowing, and of **that which comes to be known.**” (St. Amour 2022, 138, emphasis added). It is a universal viewpoint because it underpins all that is to be known. But, to push this quote a bit further, an explanatory understanding of knowing is an understanding of knowing in terms of the activities (operations) that constitute knowing. But knowing knowing is one thing. It is another thing to know knowing concretely, as a series of sublated functional specialties, in its many different forms (mathematical, scientific, common sense, artistic etc.) and in its many different fields. Just as FC (and its eight FSs) is a universal viewpoint on the vast panorama of the universe, so too we need a comprehensive heuristic if we are to understand concretely the variable forms of any object whether faith, an economy, a society, the human good etc. A comprehensive explanatory understanding of that object is not just the activities that constitute that object but also an understanding of its many variations. In housing, for example, I am confronted with empirical data which shows that housing has a multitude of variable characteristics – building materials, size, type (such as house or unit), number of rooms and function of rooms, tenure, siting, relationship with

¹⁵ Or, as I have proposed elsewhere, FC is “a complete ordered set of eight inter-related questions” (McNelis 2014a, 3, 50, 199, 208, 220, 227; McNelis 2016, 415ff) to which we need new answers to make progress in any area of human endeavour.

neighbourhood, utilities etc. These vary widely from society to society and from culture to culture. The role of FS Interpretation is to provide a comprehensive heuristic, one which distinguishes, orders, relates and integrates the key elements of housing and variations within these elements. Housing draws on and is an expression of the technological, economic, political, cultural, personal and religious values of a society. These are a series of 'whats' (or purposes, roles or functions) that order the characteristics of housing in such a way that each 'what' is achieved.¹⁶ The more comprehensive the heuristic, the more sensitive other FSs will be to possible interpretations and possible directions.^{17 18}

FS Research begins with the most up-to-date comprehensive heuristic and is seeking anomalies and omissions (Anderson, 33), evidence to confirm, complement or upset that heuristic. Theology draws on religious experience and its expression in all faith traditions (Lonergan 2017, chapter 4, Sections 3 & 4) which are located in many different contexts, in the technological, economic, political, cultural, personal and religious values that constitute a society. African and Indian theologies are providing data/evidence which challenges the current heuristics of (European) theology and point to the need for new heuristics (which incorporate the new data). This new data might highlight or prioritise some aspect of religious experience that to date has been neglected, downplayed or forgotten in the European tradition. It invites FS Interpretation to develop a more comprehensive heuristic as an answer to a what-is-it question.

A reworked comprehensive heuristic developed in FS Interpretation provides FS History with a heuristic which is so comprehensive that it can identify the particularities of any faith tradition at any time in history and, thus, provide a basis for working out the presuppositions of this faith tradition, the yet to be discovered vectors carrying it forward.

¹⁶ Another example. It is one thing to understand the geometry of a circle. It is another more complex task to reach an understanding of wheels from the empirical data of many different types of wheels (train, car, bicycle, truck, skateboard, steering wheel, cogwheel, flywheel, casters etc.) that vary widely in shape, size, materials, hubs, spokes and rims according to some purpose, function or role that a particular wheel plays. These multiple purposes are a series of 'whats' that order the shape, size, materials etc. of wheels in such a way that each 'what' is achieved.

¹⁷ As James Duffy notes we need diagrams to assist in this process (Duffy, 65).

¹⁸ Here I have restricted myself to the heuristics of the human good. Philip McShane's W1 metagram: $HS(f(p_i; c_j; b_k; z_l; u_m; r_n))$ points to a much broader heuristic.

FS Dialectic assembles the results of FS History, the vectors of change within as broad a range of faith traditions as possible. It does not work within one faith tradition. It evaluates whether and to what extent the vectors of those histories (their presuppositions) have contributed to the development of that tradition and then, works out how these principles of development can be integrated into the best of the past.¹⁹ In particular, FS Dialectic focuses on whether and to what extent these traditions align with (or enlarge) the 'engines' of progress: coming to know through experiencing, understanding and judging; becoming authentic persons by choosing what is worthwhile; becoming fully alive as being-in-love, by living and loving within the stream of cosmic history, i.e. through intellectual, moral and religious conversion.²⁰

The forward-looking FSs—Foundations, Policies/Doctrines, Systematics and Communications – return us to the particularities of our own faith tradition 'armed' with the experience and knowledge of many different traditions and what has promoted development in them. Our challenge then is work out what needs to change in our own tradition if it is to develop further.

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¹⁹ Coelho (52) references Raimon Panikkar... only the 'other' "can help me discover my presuppositions and the underlying principles of my science. In brief, *das Ungedachte*, the unthought, can be disclosed only by one who does not 'think' like me and who helps me discover the unthought magma out of which my thinking crystallizes. For my part, I can do him the same service." (Panikkar 1983, 333).

²⁰ As Cyril noted, it is not enough to recognise conflicts, call for a 'spiritual revolution' and condemn violence, we have to analyse and address the roots of the conflict (Orji 2008, 11). He asks: "how do African societies, ravaged by years of ethnic conflict and religious violence, move toward peace and the establishment of the rule of law that respects the rights and dignity of everyone in society, regardless of race, ethnicity, or religion? What is the best way of bringing about a peaceful and just society?" (Orji 2008, 141).

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