

## SEMINAR TWO: Functional Interpretation Q. And A. Session by Phil McShane

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**SEMINAR TWO: Functional Interpretation Q. And A. Session April 27th, 2011.**

Greetings All,

The second seminar, on "Functional Interpretation" is scheduled to begin on April 27th. Already there are more than a dozen active participants on the list. Questions about its dynamics have been asked, although such questions do have answers hidden away in FuSe 10, already available on the Blog site and on the usual McShane Website, [www.philipmcshane.ca](http://www.philipmcshane.ca). A few essentials then: only one written venture is anticipated [say, before mid-June]. Various topics are suggested, but the main challenge may well be taken as the topic of musing loosely, so that there be no pressure to try to write in the focused differentiated way that the mature specialty demands. That main challenge - probably the toughest in Lonergan interpretation, functional or otherwise- is to see can you splice together *Method* chapter 7 and *Insight* chapter 17 [the two sections 3.6 and 3.8]. But you may find your own selected text or zone for functional interpretation e.g. have a shot at interpreting the paragraph in the middle of page 287 of *Method*.

I am prepared to dialogue with anyone who wishes to do so re: their choice and their efforts.

The seminar is to be interrupted for me twice: for the LA Conference (Apr 28 - May 3) and for the Mexican -Puebla- Conference (June 15- 18), but I will catch up on correspondence when I return from each.

Seminar One is not a prerequisite, but it would be as well to have grappled a bit with FuSes 0,1,3,4,5,6,7,8,9. Fuse 2, not on that list, is directly related to this second seminar.

We begin this second seminar with a question session, but with only one question. It is a question shared by various people but I home in on one lengthy version of it which, however, I only quote briefly within my answer.

The Question, and its answer fits in nicely after that Appendix added to the final Question, Q.17, of the first seminar. "Can YOU go on?". Despite that Appendix people give me the impression in some of their questions and writings that, really, we have a fair idea of functional collaboration now. THAT is a brutally destructive idea, a indecent confinement, a killing off of invention and fantasy and future strangeness and joy. We will be dealing with this challenge all along, all through these next millennia, indeed. But let us tackle the issue in a small way here in **Q.18**.

**Q. 18 We have, from the first seminar, and from various of the diagrams, a fair idea of the dynamics of functional collaboration and it's baton exchanges etc. We have the idea, indeed, from reading Method in Theology. Why, then, the delay in getting into it seriously? Why 24 more seminars?**

## A. 18.

First I must ask cheekily "can you go on" (*Method in Theology*, 287). We have the problem of not having Lonergan's achievement of acquis, of standard model, of serious viewpoint.

But yes, on the other hand, we can certainly get started in some serious fashion, as long as we tune into the sad fact that we are deeply handicapped.

And then, on the third hand, I can claim that we are in fact starting, and in a way that keeps the handicap to the fore: AS WE SHALL SEE.

Now, why the capitals there? Because we are going to be fighting against the cosmic pressure towards what I may call loosely paradigm shifts. The seeds of fantasy within us, in the chemical zeal mentioned at the bottom of page 722 of *Insight*, wants us to be open to, might I say, sensing the sunflower in the seed or sapling, and thus of "sensing the past as better than it was" (*Method in Theology*, 251). Such a sensing, beyond pilgrim state, is to be an endless genetic wonderment of the Eschaton and that gives us the nudge towards admitting that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor sense sensed ....".

But let me get on with some prosaic pointers, using the question as it was posed to me recently and at some length.

The problem posed is an enormous problem of heuristics, especially in that it relates deeply to the problem of large-scale paradigm shifts. It would require another book to handle it, way beyond Kuhn [I tackled Kuhn in **Cantower** 16, after delaying with ecological shifts according to Goudge in **Cantower** 14]. Again, it is the problem buried in GEM 141 [top lines of *A Third Collection*, 141]: the heuristic has to keep pace with the content. Again, it relates to the two other biographers, Mathews and Crowe, failing totally on this point: they miss the clue of the book Lindsay and Margenau, a clue which I took up and gave as the basic chapter, chapter 10, of the Biography. Reading that chapter seriously would open one to the change of perspective I am talking about, one that is needed as an internal achievement in order to establish the science, the system of functional collaboration [see *Method in Theology, Revisions and Implementations*: where I oppose Doran's simple view of system]. Or to get a grip on what I am pointing too, see what headway you can make on the central problem of the second seminar i.e. how do we arrive at a workable integral perspective of the mesh of *Method* chapter 7 and *Insight* chapter 17, section 3.

That workable integral perspective requires a massive creative start to functional collaboration. It is totally different from a *haute vulgarization* that would talk generally of a problem to be solved. It is a What is X, where how to go about whatting is itself to be discovered. This is not foreign to serious inquiry. Felix Klein, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century,

talked of mathematics' method as changing every month. Husserl's doctorate under Weierstrass was on the topic of the few changes in The Calculus of Variation up to the date 1882. To know these from within is a massive lift of culture. For that reason, in chapter 4 of *Lack in the Beingstalk*, "The Calculus of Variation", I used Husserl's work, and the advances since, as the analogue for **The Calculus of Variation** that is functional collaboration.

Recall the first pages of MIT's chapter 1: the problem of having an analogue from a successful science. What was clear to Lonergan there - as in *Insight* - is that the only mature science was/is physics, with chemistry trailing and botany - even now - in a shambles of descriptive reductionism. One has to ask oneself - as Lonergan asked the theologians once "Can I read Lindsay and Margenau?". I don't know your background, good reader, in physics, but without the serious analogies given there one is trapped in the "no man's land" which is *haute vulgarization* (See Vol. 6 121 155 and Vol 10 145). I have been battling Doran unsuccessfully re this for 20 years; I disagreed with Crowe about it in the mid-sixties.

A very simple illustration - which therefore fails as an analogue - is talking to some one who knows tadpoles, but has never seen a frog ... yet imagines he knows frogs; or the same with sunflower seeds and sprouts in relation to the mature sunflower.

I could go over your lengthy first e-mail but perhaps the point is emergent?

What to do? Well, lets take the questioner's paragraph:

"Of course in that regard, FS, as you say, is similar to Newton's work, etc. However, if FS is authentic theory, or to be verified, and if it will give us the frame for analysis and for forward and creative directions, it must relate to the data in some way. In our case, FS as theory is of the data and the data is how history actually unfolds."

Even just puzzle over the concluding phrase: "data is how history actually unfolds" . The meaning here is certainly obscure. Does it point to the fact that the advance of understanding in history reveals the data of history, which is true in a very subtle sense, and ties in with the pressure of GEM141. Content reveals method and in the case of functional collaboration there is no content. There is no science. There is no Standard Model. It is named scantily on pages 286-7 of *Method* in its *Insight* content. The mid-paragraph of p. 287 laughingly says "one can go on" to rewrite the first part of *Method*. There is little sign of anyone going on with Lonergan's power of controlling meaning by the heuristics based of the formula  $f(p_i ; c_j ; b_k ; z_l ; u_m ; r_n)$ . One can, discomforting, view Crowe's stumbling around with the functional specialty history, or even go back to Doran's pre-functional stumblings regarding dreams.

At all events, without the backing of scientifically-conceived analogues, your view turns out to be a good popularization of an old-time view of metaphysics. One can name e.g.

"actual basic structure (the data of the theory) that is actually unfolding (as we see it every day in everything that occurs " .... but you have lost Klein, and Husserl in his decent early work. You are settling for a described tadpole, instead of pushing towards that vision that is to give the heuristic possibility of "seeing the past as better than it was" (MIT, 253) in such a way as to open our reachings for structures of living way beyond our present nightmares.

And thinking of those nightmares, muse over the "obvious" problem of economics which is NOT a science .... so there is no heuristics of it, either functional or non-functional. You say of physics : "In physics, the data is, well, physical properties and functions. The theory is new; however, the data is not. " Unlike the given (*Insight* chapter 13), data is mediated.

Change physics to economics in your statement. There is a massive problem of identifying the data which I cannot go into. What is the new economics going to be like? It is no more familiar than functional collaboration, which indeed is to be an integral component of both it and of physics and all other disciplines.

The problem in these next decades or generations is the emergence of foundational persons who meet criteria that go way beyond the high hopes of Jose Ortega y Gasset. Such persons are to ground a cyclic collaboration that is quite beyond present fantasy.

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