

Q. 13. (Anonymous: February 2nd 2013). There seems to be some response to the pressure you are exerting on the Lonergan movement to move into the zone of functional collaboration. I find myself willing to get involved, but am pretty lost as to how to go about it. I know that you have written about strategies of getting going, but your writing is quite involved, and your latest efforts in the *Posthumous* series seem even more complicated. Is there a way in which you could give some concrete leads here?

A. 13. Your question is timely, since I have completed the *Posthumous* series of 21 essays, which are my final formal effort to reorientate Lonergan studies towards a full seriousness about Lonergan's hopes and intentions.

Before I get into some detail I wish to express my own hopes about the move forward, some of which found expression already in the later *Posthumous* essays. There, at various stages, I expressed the hope that this **Q/A** series would broaden out, so that the Questions would not be simply questions but also include suggestions, puzzlings about strategies, etc. We are all in this mess together and we need to mess forward humbly. I myself have not seriously achieved precise expression in any particular specialty, despite my chatter over the past 42 years. So let's see, stumble by stumble, **Q/A** by **Q/A**, what moves we can make together.

First then I should say something about the mess, but in simple fashion: just focusing on a main important point. An aside here: I have emphasized that anonymous questions are being included, and the anonymity respected. This relates to the basic mess. Many of my senior colleagues just don't see, or didn't see until my more recent bluntnesses, that there is a mess. So, making stumbling creative moves in – ho ho – their old age is not easy. But – ho ho again – making creative moves as a freshly doctorated or even freshly interested person is not easy either.

O.K. Now can I give **a general idea** of the mess? Not really: and that is a large part of the mess. A fresh slow reading of the first four paragraphs of *Method* chapter one can help here. Theology – or religious studies - at present, despite vast eruditions, is not a respectable science. This is a disturbing claim, and the disturbance is part of the mess. In 1961 Lonergan told the story of a person asked Einstein asking for **a general idea** of relativity. Asking what is the mess is like asking Einstein to explain his climb to general relativity. Later Lonergan talked of the menace of *haute vulgarization* (CWL 6: 121, 155): if you have never really done serious explanatory theoretic work, you don't even know that this issue it is a strange, foreign, and indeed threatening, zone. One can mistake for theoretical work endless correlating and classificatory efforts that are like the centuries of pre-scientific botany.

The positive core of the mess is that theology is now being pressured to get seriously explanatory, especially in relation to human sexuality, to hunger, to loneliness, to economics, to ecology. The message runs right through *Insight* and right through *Method*. That was a focus in my *Posthumous* essays; a very unwelcome message. Still, some people have got a glimpse, and more people have been nudged to ask, What has Lonergan studies really achieved in the past fifty years?

I won't go on about the mess. Even if you think that I exaggerate, still, you could agree with my questioner, that we should make some moves into functional collaboration. SO: what moves might I

suggest? – and note that these are only my suggestions, briefly stated. By the time we get to **Q. 101** we may be in a whole new optimistic and well-defined ballpark.

So let me try a rough listing.

[1] We need to cultivate a sense of the mess and the need to work our way into the “almost empty” heuristics offered by Lonergan. There are various ways of symbolizing this emptiness, but a handy image is of imagining a fresh beginning of the study of strange tadpole with age-span in years of one to 9,999 to becoming a frog in ten thousand years. We have a decent look at the tadpole age 1274 {Thomas} and a decent plan for studying the entire life of the tadpole combined with details of the tadpole at age 1974 {Lonergan}, but Massive gaps. How to deal with this situation? Patiently and slowly, with many QQ/AA! The image is quite a suggestive but tricky one helping towards glimpsing the needed reach towards the sequence of genetically related axiom-systems that is the genetics of the theology necessary for the ongoing genesis of theology and of Christ’s symphony. As we putter here through [2] ff., we’ll get a better sense of our obscure pathway. In [5] I get back to the tadpole image.

[2] One key possible start is for each of us to do – even unshared, if sharing is too frightening! – what I call the exercise of the 1833 Overture: those lines 18 to 33 of *Method* 250. Find out where we stand. In particular, puzzle over our existential stand on [1], which would involve some acknowledgement on our lack of theoretic education. But the big shift would be to a consensus about giving functional collaboration a try, even if we opt out of a serious ambition to become a member of the scientific tower. I would note that opting out can be positive. From such an opt-out position one can push into the zones pointed to in [3] and [4].

[3] This is a zone related to implementation [*Insight*, 416, bottom] and “fruit to be borne” [*Method*, 355]. I think of it especially in terms of “making effective noise” in education and in economics. I won’t go further on this here, but I note that these are practical issues that can be handled with “commonsense Lonergan studies” AND can help to get us all to see one aspect of “the mess”: the present failure to reach effective practical results.

[4] the other zone is at the other end {FS 1} of the cycle from implementation {FS 8}, in that it nudges, even from common sense, towards raising questions, under the general slogan, “**this** is worth looking into”, which pushes the seriously ambitious to lift their game.

[5] lifting the game: that is the objective, and thinking it out reveals the difficulties and, as well, strategies that could work. So, here I come to those seriously committed to doing their bit to move into the difficult beginnings. First, back we go to the tadpole image: T 1274 and T 1974 being “held” loosely by us through imagining that we have some grip on a genetics of systems from fertilized egg to ... old tadpole. What, you may ask, of the adult, the frog, with its quite different swim-stroke based on equally different system? THAT question nudges us to grapple with the envisagement of “knowledge of all that is lacking” (*Insight*, 559).

We need people willing to push into various areas that attract them – this attractiveness and willingness really need thinking over and tossing about communally - **but** committed to working on the broad

heuristic at the same time. No way am I going to get into that here: just recall e.g. (i) the **comeabout** text of *Insight*, 537, bottom (ii) **W₃** as broad image – leave out for the moment perhaps its enlargement gained by a filling out, **W_{3T}**, of the lower line, one given by the later *Posthumous* essays (iii) the terrible challenge of imaging the task and achievement of *Insight* 17.3. (iv) these first three are intimately related, and the link-up is the challenge to understand the key paragraph of the second canon of hermeneutics AND its transposition into what I call **The Standard Model**, a filled-out heuristic that is to dominate the cycling of collaboration, described briefly in *FuSe* 10, section 3, as “FS + UV + GS”.

[6] I could turn, at this stage, to details about those willing to work in some other discipline, not counting philosophy for the moment. But I and others have given a fair amount of hints about these: see Shute’s first article coming out in *Divyadaan* 2013, “Functional Collaboration as the Implementation of ‘Lonergan’s Method Part 1: For What Problem is Functional Collaboration the Solution?’” *Divyadaan: Indian Journal of Philosophy and Education*,” volume 24, no. 1 (2013), with a follow-up second article on the way.

But I have already gone into too much for this single answer A of Q/A. I would note, however, the usefulness of an ingesting of *Cantowers* 7, “Systematics and General Systems Theory” and *Cantower* 8, “Slopes: an Encounter”. In the latter, in section 4, “We made at once for a Sloping Bank”, there is a glimpse of how all disciplines slope up convergingly to a common dialectic. The slope down, from common foundations to a thousand villages and a million classrooms, is plainly not symmetrical.

The problem is to have constructive detailed questions and responses to these suggestions. Unless you have been battling with this for some time, this whole pointing effort is all too vague. THAT brings us right back to the initial problem of THE MESS: trying to see what a sad mess we are in in theology, effete, rich in descriptive and comparative organized ramblings, pictures of tadpoles in various poises and states: BUT how to cure the present sick tadpole so that it moves to froginess? How to get us moving now so as to arrive at tadpole aged 9011 – at Cosmopolis: a decent challenge, indeed, to “embrace the universe in a single view” (*Insight*, 442).

[7] So I conclude by pointing to one particular zone from which such constructive questions and responses may be fermented: the zone that is the expression of a seminar subgroup that tried to get to grips with the mess, the possibility, the hope. The seminar effort is represented by the series on my Website named *FuSes*. It was intended to run for over six years. I leave you to check out the details, e.g. by reading through *FuSe* 10, “Contexts of Functional Interpretation”. The seminar faltered after a year: people were just too busy and too tired to push forward AND this in itself is a message. But progress was made during those first four seminars. Some of us can surely take a start from there. The first seminar, especially, in functional research, enlightened us on the gap in pointers left by Lonergan in *Method*, and gave leads on how we might weave forward. That first seminar’s expression is in *FuSes* 0-9, or also available as Volume 8 of the *Journal of Macrodynamic Analysis*.

Enough, then for this Question, and for this fresh start!