

Q. 38 (anonymous, group: April 15th) The recent WCMJ LA Conference illustrated very clearly the problem you have been writing about in the recent Q/A. There was an overwhelming amount of comparative studies. It is not easy to see the flaws, the opposite view, the way between them, one that would work towards functional talk. Could you say more on this, and on comparing (a) Jones and Smith, (b) Lonergan and Jones?

A. 38. The question is a condensation of questions of a group of puzzled people. I was not at the conference, but have the Agenda, mused over it, and have either received or requested papers from different participants. My problem now is, what can I say that is helpful, that would help us along towards a functional bent that would both contrast with normal papers and be effective towards long-term progress. I would note immediately, however, that the strategy of the conference meets short term needs, especially for struggling thesis-writers, grad-students, in line with what Lonergan told me in 1968: to give the guy what he wants and get the union card! Still, it seems to me that we can find a way forward that would get the same sort of thesis work done constructively.

What might I say briefly? My recent answers have been ineffective in being too long. Let me see can I give short leads, and one way I note immediately is to split the question above so that we try the (a) problem here, and then, in Q/A 39, we can muse over problem (b), of comparing Lonergan with Jones. Might I hope that the musings would help the emergent Jerusalem Conference, and an emergent alternate to Lonerganism? So I am led further in my planned answers to implicit elements in Q 38, and the concern expressed by the group that contacted me, which should be addressed: Q.40: What is the way forward in comparative work? Q.41: Can such comparative work swing into cyclic functional work?

Here, then, I pause over Problem (a), comparing Jones and Smith, but I must immediately note that these Q/A are just rambles and nudges that look forward to a later culture of lengthy expression creating a quite new scientific ethos.

What I would like is to get you - and indeed the Lonergan community - towards an effective nominal acceptance of genetic systematics as part of what we might call "standard procedure". I use the name "standard procedure" because I don't want

you to be put off by the name ***Standard Model***, and perhaps I should even dodge talking of genetic systematics and use an apparently simple word like 'growth'.

At any rate I would like to try to make 'growth-heuristics' plausible to the tradition of Lonergan talk that is represented by comparative work. Indeed - and this is to be the topic of Q/A 41 - this entry point may be the way to lift a named "Lonergan Standard Model", of eighth collaborative specialties, beyond nominalism.

Strangely, the entry point I suggest is from the most compact statement of Lonergan's heuristics of interpretation, the paragraph I have named 60910,(the one on the turn of the pages 609 and 610 in *Insight*).

One has illustrations in Lonergan [and of course in the history of science] of the genetic [and dialectic] shifting: water, spacetime, oxidation, even neurodynamics. What is needed is a simpler commonsense pointing to the dynamics in relation to the comparative work that dominates Lonerganism: Lonergan and Einstein, Lonergan and Gadamer, Lonergan and Pierce, whatever. The writers of such comparisons have to be brought gently to notice and express more luminously that they are using - in what we'll talk of in Q/A 40 as inadequate self-luminosity - some norms, standards, of comparison.

So what is it to compare Lonergan and Einstein? Notice that this is different from Lonergan's beginnings on the problem of interpretation in *Insight* 17.3. One is here, so to speak, either just talking to oneself, or doing a more complex interpretation than that with which Lonergan begins: he is writing, in *Insight* 17.3, of communicating the meaning of X to an audience. So, here we muse over a more complex communication: we think of Lonergan, Einstein, and the difference between them. Notice, too, that "the difference" calls in, when working excellently, the geohistorical global matrix, M_{rat} , (r , radius from the center of the globe, \mathbf{a} , representing suitable angular coordinates, usually given in Greek letters) that I wrote of in Q/A 36. Lonergan and Einstein are in different time-tubes. Start your image conveniently in 1904, Switzerland and Quebec; 40 years later you have tube-intersections through Lindsay and Margenau.

Notice how Lonergan shifts the problem of difference to the interpreter teaching an audience. The teacher has to compare, somehow, the text writer to the audience. Compare in the sense of link-up-with the audience. How is one to do the link-up? Lonergan sketches the procedure, “A to F”, and he does it in three shifts, the last to the **impossible** where the audience has a decent notion of its own intellectual development. Wow!

We know how Lonergan pushes on from the impossible to introducing the topic of universal viewpoint. We try another pragmatic road, which oddly lands us into the ‘famous’ paragraph 60910.

The audience is not that keen on discovering its own development and expressing it – that is an explicit ongoing task of the 1833 Overture – in its genetic and dialectic aspects. So the more possible route is, so to speak, to go objective in a sort of bogus way. Let us leave “Lonergan and X” to the next Q/A, 39, and think of “other pairs”.

A neat clean route here would be to take pairs from people like Archimedes and Galileo and Newton and Maxwell and Einstein, or the equivalent in a higher science, but this is not comfortable for philosophers or theologians. So we stay in their zone, noting in passing for ourselves that the non-comfort has very telling grounds.

So we think of comparing Hume to Hegel, or Aristotle to Aquinas, or Marx to Sartre. We surely have to notice the relevance of time here. The first guy was not in a position to read the second. The first, A, made some progress, and the second, B, did something about that progress: adding or denying, with modifications. The comparing surely requires that we understand A and B, at least in the zones of comparison, and are up to figuring out the additions, denials, modifications. We somehow have to be better than B: a sobering idea! [A sobering comment on the many theses and articles comparing Lonergan and X.]

But let us stick with the simplest ethos and challenge of **comparing**.

A and B are on a topic. A may be Aristotle and B may be Aquinas. Whatever pair suits your thinking through of this. The topic is a piece of what is real. Notice that

the focus can be so thoroughly on the piece that questions about “real” do not easily arise. Think of comparing Newton and Einstein re **space**. But the comparer should be tuned into both meanings of the piece. Tuned into? Be in control of the best available opinion of the time, agreed upon to some extent at that time. Notice how we are in the context of “Understanding the Object” (*Method*, 156-58: take note of the fact that in a subject-as-subject culture the object luminously includes the subjects). The common object is what grounds the comparing: one does not easily compare hairstyles with vocal talents. But here, in philosophy and theology, some opinion on the real would seem to be fairly central. That opinion, the best available, has to be possessed by, and in possession of, the comparer. The comparer has to have a position, and so we run into Lonergan’s claim that the position is The Position (*Insight*, 413). But Lonergan enlarges that Position (especially in chapter 17 of the book) to include a grip on the spectrum of positions: here at least one has to expect an understanding of the part of the spectrum which includes the positioning of A and the positioning of B. What is realistically and optimally required is a framework of positionings. The problem, here and now in our reading, and there and then in comparing, is the minimal context of that framework. So, we can perhaps rest in some vague division associated with sensing, whatting, and is-ing: where the is-ing allows for the is-ing to be of something characteristic of the world of Hegel. Further, we can muse on “the greater the exegete’s resources” (*Method*, 156, bottom: and see top lines of 158).

Further still, it would seem that the comparer should be self-luminous and upfront about the framework, “at pains not to conceal his tracks” (*Method*, 193). Think again on the problem posed at the beginning of *Insight* 17.3: if you are trying to interpret X to an audience, a colleague, it is a great help if both be as luminous as possible re personal positioning. Note too that this is what is whirled into the cyclic collaboration by the 1833 overture as it cycles the community to ever-more-subtle “cumulative and progressive results”¹ on positioning.

¹ *Method in Theology*, 4. I keep referring to this phrase, repeated in italics on page 5 of the book. The repeating may be a helpful re-nudging. The present crisis in Lonergan Studies could be considered to be a gross failure to read pages 3 and 4 of *Method*. We are back to the topics of my last few *Posthumous* essays.

Refinements enter the Standard Model as paradigm shifts. But we are pushing towards Q/A 41.

And you may rightly suggest that we have wandered away from 60910. In fact I have been hovering over the first ten words of the sentence: “The explanatory differentiation of the protean notion of being involves,” but in a less frightening manner than Lonergan’s climb to that 60910 paragraph. The comparer is a protean notion of being in some state of development, of refinement. We have been modestly groping towards a realistic glimpse of the needs of the comparer, how to somehow tune effectively to A and B. It is not a great leap to say that A and B are, on their topic, related either genetically or dialectically, with modifications. If the modifications are only linguistic then we have the limit case of non-genetic, static agreement, something pretty regular in a culture that maintains a paradigm Standard Model, and indeed very regular in the stance of the writers and audience at Lonergan Conferences. But the big thing is to get the comparer to begin - luminously - to think genetically, to see this as the basis of the comparison, and to see that this basis had best be luminous and self-luminous in a simple sense “I am, self-luminously, a heuristic of a genetic spectrum of positionings.”

This is as far as I would push initially. Notice that there is no mention of a universal viewpoint, nor any elaboration on the nature of The Position. What I point to is a sort of revision of the demands of *Method* chapter 7, on knowing the object, the author, the self. The fourth knowing pointed to there is knowing the author’s words. The twist is in adding two authors together. It gets *Method 7* forward, in the simplest fashion, to 60910. What of the language business, which turns up in 60910 “Thirdly”? No fuss about that: new words and uses of words appear, apart from the problems of translation. “Mental positioning regarding what is real”: that is obviously novel. Then there is “self-luminous”. And so on.

Back then to “Secondly”. We are still talking about A and B, B being at a later time. Implicitly, but not threateningly, we are talking about the comparer, nudging you towards the view that the comparer has to be sufficiently competent in the two views, and even in the transition – however vaguely that is grasped.

Think of that vagueness in terms of the vagueness of botanical transitions breezed past by Lonergan in *Insight* chapter 15. That is at present pretty vague in botany: what is the catalytic poise of the flower-integrator in the concrete context of the ecosystem? And what of the transitions that are noted as deteriorations, resulting from droughts and eco-damage? So we can putter along towards some vague view of “the discoverer’s own grasp of his discovery”, a very tricky phrase in the paragraph. Which discoverer has Lonergan in mind here? Aristotle’s grasp of his own discovery, or Hume’s? Or the reader of the paragraph? Or the speaker or audience of the reflective interpretation, that fantasyland achievement of *Insight* 586?

But, again, I reach beyond the simple point I wish to raise in this A.38: that the comparer has to control the two views, but the adequate control requires a luminous, a self-luminous control over a third view: his or her own. Are you with me? We’ll get back to that in Q/A 40. Before going there we need to go back to the issue raised in Q. 38 titled (b): the problems associated with comparing Lonergan and Jones. I must insist, however, that the answering here and throughout are simply nudges, hopefilled nudges, encouraging first steps beyond stale effete conventions.