

Q. 47 (May 13th). My interest is in history: in intellectual history. For that I find the context of Lonergan's *Method* chapters on History suggestive, giving precise meaning and a decent context, within critical realism, to pushing towards "what really happened" (Ranke). It also seems to fit in nicely with what is written about intellectual history in *Insight*. The notion of functional history, however, seems odd, almost contrafactual. Certainly it is distant from the sort of work that goes on in Boston College and, I suspect, in other centers of Lonergan studies. Could you please give some pointers in this matter?

A. 47. The question led me back to the *FuSe* essays that deal with the problem of moving to functional history.¹ These were the work of the third seminar of a proposed 25 seminars over more than six years. The project failed mainly because people just did not have the time to participate. The relevant *FuSe* essays are numbers 13 to 15, but the 14th essay is in fact a series of essays from different members of the seminar. The 15th essay, "The Future of Functional History," concludes with a sad relevant point regarding your question and what we are at, what we are to be at in the Conference in Vancouver of July 21-25, 2014. On the concluding page 11 in that *FuSe* essay I remark on the disinterest of my colleagues in the climb of the seminars. I have had to pause over this problem these days, as I think more concretely of the need to prepare for the meeting in Vancouver next year. That meeting is to represent a shocking discontinuity. It is a discontinuity that I might symbolize by going back to the central topic of *FuSe* 15, which topic was the Grand Canyon between two paragraphs on page 586 of *Insight*. There is the paragraph on "the simple interpretation" followed by the paragraph that begins "A reflective interpretation." Best to leave you to read what I wrote in *FuSe* 15, but please add the spice of satire and humour that was brought in as a topic and a fact in previous Q/A here. The adding here symbolizes the problem of shifting from the supposed factual to the actual functional, from dull pseudo-facts to Divine Comedy.²

¹ You will notice that I avoid the problem of how Lonergan dealt with history or functional history in *Method*'s two chapters on the topic. The issue is quite complex, as I know from detailed notes generously made available to me by Patrick Brown, whose work on the emergence on *Method* is masterly. I would note, in the context of the present set of *FuSe* essays on functional history, his magnificent essay *FuSe* 14B: "Some Notes on the Development of *Method* Page 250" (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/fuse-14b.pdf>). At all events, you will notice the gap in my answer: a fuller discussion of the treatment of history in *Method* would be required in order to deal adequately with the view expressed by my questioner in the second sentence of the question. My hope here is rather to point to a mood relevant to historical studies that is neatly caught in the complex paralleling symbolized by the sentence on line 3 of *Insight* 490, "However, the organism grows and develops."

² Personally I found it a huge problem, of the past decade, to conceive history properly, weaving in as fact its potentialities, including the potentialities of its flaws. The climb is not easy to intimate in a culture which lacks sensibility to the explanatory meaning and miracle of the shift from seed to sunflower in a flawed ecosystem. My *Cantower* series began, indeed, with the reach of *Cantower* 2, "Sunflowers, Speak to Us of Growing" (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/cantower2.pdf>).

My problem, increasingly, in these Q/As is keeping the stuff brief and suggestive.³ I am always tempted to enlarge, building in my own shifts since I wrote *FuSes* 13: “Contexts of Functional History”, 14A: “One Hundred and One Damnations,” and 15: “The Future of Functional History.” Such enlarging is effectively beyond *haute vulgarization* in a sophisticated culture of science, one which has at least the ethos, but not of course the explanation, of reflective interpretation. So, for instance, in undergraduate classes in physics I could throw out pointers that would not be mistaken for the pop-talk of informing:⁴ the pointers, for those attuned to the serious culture of physics, meant graduate efforts of understanding.

There is an ontic image of the phyletic Grand Canyon that could be slowly dug out of darkness here, beyond *haute vulgarization*. But **here** means you and my senior colleagues acknowledging the reality of the third way talked of so briefly on page 3 of *Method*. Think of the phrase ‘the audience’s habitual grasp C’ of its own intellectual development.’⁵ This is really a private joke of Lonergan, somewhat like that humorous phrase in the paragraph in the middle of page 287 of *Method*, “one can go on.” So far, there is little sign of anyone rewriting the first four chapters of *Method* to meet Lonergan’s demands and to reveal thus both a shocking intellectual development and a serious habitual grasp of it.⁶

But my problem in writing this shadow of an answer is NOT to go on. At the end of page 4 of *FuSe* 3 I remarked that “what is killing present efforts to understand history is the absence of a sufficient ethos of ‘not understanding.’” In the earlier pages I talked of the need to symbolize the climb, pausing over the 17th word of *Insight*’s first chapter, *Renaissance*, and reading the object referred to chemically. But now I add a nudge to read it eventually in the luminous challenging intussusception of the chemistry of the writer who wrote of a new renaissance in world order in the last line of *Insight* 722 as he headed for his 50th year. In that line he talks about tuning good will so that “it wills with that order’s dynamic joy and zeal.” Then you would also be able to read creatively of ‘the audience’s habitual grasp C’ of its own intellectual development.’⁷

How can I not go on a bit? Not, indeed, to send you back to seriously grapple with history’s finality in Clapsed prime potency. Only to note, with some aesthetic sensibility, that the

³ This is one of four questions pending. I put them in the order that seems best to generate light on each and all, and on the overall project of functional talk and functional collaboration. There other three question concerning (1) problems with **W₃**; (2) slow shifts within the new paradigm; and (3) some sublation of de Caussade’s view as located in Crowe’s *Theology of the Christian Word*.

⁴ One might think here of *Scientific American*.

⁵ *Insight*, 586.

⁶ If it is done in the context of the definition of generalized empirical method given at the top of page 141 of *A Third Collection*, then luminosity regarding one’s climb is a given in the deepest sense.

⁷ *Insight*, 586.

development, fully Cherished, is luminously incomplete, and without that lean-to 'stabilization', history is just 101 damn nations.⁸ The calling and cauling in that new covenant are to phase the facts that are, indeed, rank,⁹ if grasped without an incarnate echo of profound incompleteness. What is a tadpole if not appreciated as a cloaked face, phase, of the frog? And what if the frog is kissed, kiss-met?

There is much more to be thought and talked and walked about the tadpole of intellectual history in *Insight* and of *Insight* and the relentless lean-to – it was in his walk – of its writer. “To say it all with the greatest brevity, one has not only to discover oneself in oneself but to read *Insight*.”¹⁰

⁸ An echo of the title of *FuSe* 14A (see <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/fuse-14a.pdf>).

⁹ My meaning here is first cousin to the meaning of *rancid*. There is a great deal to be written about the brief pointing of Lonergan on *Method* 250: “history in the style of Burckhardt rather than Ranke”.

¹⁰ *Method in Theology*, 260. I must presume that you did not miss my warping of that sentence of Lonergan. If you did, you do not now. My twist points you to note, ringingly, tinglingly, that slow self-luminous ongoing ontic development reveals the lonely incompleteness of history and his story and His Story. Reading *Insight* thus is to discover someone who “can go on” bent on finding the Road to Religious Reality that would ground, millennia later, an Arrival in Cosmopolis.