

## Q. 52 A Focus on Concrete Results

Q. 52 As a member of SGEME I am interested in your push to get effective collaboration going. That seemed to be the purpose of forming this group. Obviously, it connects to your emphasis on implementation as part of Lonergan's view of metaphysics, but I am more interested in the practical aspects. Could you please write some helpful stuff about relevant areas of concrete application?

A. 52 Ho ho the answer to your final [is-question!] is yes! And I could halt here.

But that is my puzzle. Yes, I could, but how? I could write a whole book about it called *Insight*: but that has already been done much better than I could ever do in a dozen lifetimes. What, then, am I to do here?<sup>1</sup> I am hinting, teaching, preaching, in these Q/A, against a massive settled flood and floor of sedimented sentiment, and you are on the edge of serious listening, but the people who should be listening are neither listening nor on edge. The Lonergan groups are now heave-ho-ing into summer conferences that are not at all in the ball park of Lonergan's life-concern. I have been focused pretty well on two areas of concrete application for most of my life: functional collaboration (since Lonergan nudged me into it in 1966) and economics (since Lonergan pushed me in 1968 to find an economist). I have not found an economist; I have not founded a functional specialty. My last heavy effort re economics was in the Economics Department at a Korean state university in 2011; my last heavy effort re functional collaboration was at an L.A. Easter meeting around 2009. Both efforts were ineffective. SO: there you have two concrete applications that you might think of, and think of doing something about that would be more effective than my efforts; EVEN IF you are clearly happy not to try for Tower work. AND that last statement helps me both to give you a doable task and to help people glimpse relevant distinctions in functional talk.

My answers to questions here are generally doctrinal in the FS<sub>6</sub> sense, even though they are normally read in a C<sub>9</sub> sense.<sup>2</sup> In an operating functional collaboration, innovative doctrinal shifts are to flow on through a systematics-community to those specializing in the heuristics of 'communication to common meanings,' and so reach effectively the villages be they Hindi or Harvard.<sup>3</sup> My pessimistic view is that such a dynamic could be decently in place in 9011 A.D. BUT you can do something about that date, especially if you attend Lonergan Conferences; but

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<sup>1</sup> I might, for instance, have added in the context of 9 distinct operable generic meanings of *implementation*, and nudge you to pick up seriously and effectively on one of them. Some directions emerge in the next Q/A.

<sup>2</sup> The clearest diagramming of communications is on page 108 of my little book *A Brief History of Tongue. From Big Bang to Coloured Wholes* (Axial Press, 1998) C<sub>9</sub> is the existential context of the entire 8x8 matrix of collaborative talk.

<sup>3</sup> I draw attention once again to the need for a fresh reading of the first two sections of *Method* chapter 14: 1. Meaning and Ontology; 2. Common Meaning and Ontology.

even without that painful attendance you may simply nudge Lonergan colleagues. “We cannot go on like this through the present decade. Lonergan changed metaphysics radically by building into it effective implementation. How can we, in any honesty, stay in the old tradition, doing nothing serious about the future?”<sup>4</sup>

The old tradition has a massive history of interest and disinterest, running up through Aquinas and on through present theology and philosophy. I am obviously raising here a huge question of the traditions of theological teachings, but I need at present to focus your attention. SO, a discomfiting instance: that old tradition excluded, amazingly, **implementation** from the index of *Insight*.<sup>5</sup> Implementation is just not in the mindset of Christian thinkers.<sup>6</sup> Schools of priestly theology hand the students a large trunk, mostly nominal, of theological stuff with a purse of trivial pastoral leads, and on out they go in the same old same mold same drone syndrome.

I would make the claim that there is no serious shared conception – much less affirmation or implementation! – of implementation within the Lonergan community and I would make the doctrinal suggestion that there should be. That suggestion is FS<sub>6</sub> talk. There is no community of either FS<sub>7</sub> or FS<sub>8</sub> to make effective the suggested doctrine. So we are back to you, Towerless, but not powerless, since there is the possibility of you using that statement at the end of the second-to-last paragraph discomfitingly, in polite company, remembering Lonergan’s twinkling nudge: “Doctrines that are embarrassing will not be mentioned in polite company.”<sup>7</sup>

But I wish you to go deeper into this issue, even if you remain silent. I wish you to go back to Q/A 32, “Restructuring Conferences towards Effective Collaboration” and puzzle now over your own ultimate commitment, which I assume here for convenience to be Christian. I am asking for a private concrete application which in fact meshes nicely with my appeal, in the immediately-previous Q/A 51, for a contemplative shift. Does your present mindset include

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<sup>4</sup> The metaphysical position is simply a normative thematic of a basic human attitude, a regular deviation from which is expressed nicely by Lonergan in 1942: “The vast forces of human benevolence can no longer be left to tumble down the Niagara of fine sentiments and noble dreams” (*For A New Political Economy*, CWL 21, 36). A nice lead in to the Pope’s tumble in the speech quoted below. But your task is to avoid tumbling down to the Lonergan School.

<sup>5</sup> There is no entry under *Implementation* [mentioned explicitly at least a dozen times in the book] in the first edition of *Insight*; the 1992 edition has just two entries. Yet it is the topic of the book, a searching agony climbing from *Insight* 7.8.6 to the eloquent appeal for collaboration – mentioned in those ten pages 30+ times – of *Insight* 20.5. *Method* 5 contains his 21-page dodged answer.

<sup>6</sup> This seems an extreme claim. I recall that, when *Method* appeared, most of his disciples thought of the eighth specialty as pretty light-weight, needing little extra light, indeed very much like old-style pastoral theology. That it is to be a massively rich complex global integration of local interests was way beyond us. Recently, also, I remarked to a Lonergan expert at a conference that “we really were not getting to implementation.” The Response: “I thought that that was what we were doing here.” But the story of Lonerganism is the best witness to my claim.

<sup>7</sup> *Method in Theology*, 299.

Global Hope? Are the followers of Christ to be permanently some ghetto group waving ineffective flags in the face of the sick institutions of present paranoias and neuroses of greed and stupidity? Could you, can you, will you, struggle to change that attitude, one so sweetly expressed by our new Pope recently in a vague address. I add the address: could there not be a concrete change, even now, in your creative reading of the talking of our primary pastor? His speech reminds me of the annoyed postcard Lonergan wrote to me in 1968, "We can't go on talking about economics in terms of the family wage." What we need is the concrete effective call of faithful like you for a serious shift to a new culture of economics and functional collaboration. Otherwise the Good News is locked up through conventional guidance by "merely a constitutional monarch."<sup>8</sup>

Here you have it: the old eloquent sincere ineffective tradition "assuring you of the assistance of the Roman Curia for the fulfillment of your duties."<sup>9</sup> Read it, freshly and sadly, and then we can again muse over you and me in our concrete searching for concreteness.

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*Your Excellencies,*

I am pleased to receive you for the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassadors Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Holy See on the part of your respective countries: Kyrgyzstan, Antigua and Barbuda, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and Botswana. The gracious words which you have addressed to me, for which I thank you heartily, have testified that the Heads of State of your countries are concerned to develop relations of respect and cooperation with the Holy See. I would ask you kindly to convey to them my sentiments of gratitude and esteem, together with the assurance of my prayers for them and their fellow citizens.

Ladies and Gentlemen, our human family is presently experiencing something of a turning point in its own history, if we consider the advances made in various areas. We can only praise the positive achievements which contribute to the authentic welfare of mankind, in fields such as those of health, education and communications. At the same time, we must also acknowledge that the majority of the men and women of our time continue to live daily in situations of insecurity, with dire consequences. Certain pathologies are increasing, with their psychological consequences; fear and desperation grip the hearts of many people, even in the so-called rich countries; the joy of life is diminishing; indecency and violence are on the rise; poverty is becoming more and more evident. People have to struggle to live and, frequently, to live in an

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<sup>8</sup> Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, CWL 18, 126.

<sup>9</sup> *Address of Pope Francis to the New Non-Resident Ambassadors to the Holy See: Kyrgyzstan, Antigua and Barbuda, Luxembourg and Botswana, Clementine Hall, Thursday, 16 May 2011.* This address is available at: [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/francesco/speeches/2013/may/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130516\\_nuovi-ambasciatori\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/speeches/2013/may/documents/papa-francesco_20130516_nuovi-ambasciatori_en.html)

undignified way. One cause of this situation, in my opinion, is in our relationship with money, and our acceptance of its power over ourselves and our society. Consequently the financial crisis which we are experiencing makes us forget that its ultimate origin is to be found in a profound human crisis. In the denial of the primacy of human beings! We have created new idols. The worship of the golden calf of old (cf. *Ex 32:15-34*) has found a new and heartless image in the cult of money and the dictatorship of an economy which is faceless and lacking any truly humane goal.

The worldwide financial and economic crisis seems to highlight their distortions and above all the gravely deficient human perspective, which reduces man to one of his needs alone, namely, consumption. Worse yet, human beings themselves are nowadays considered as consumer goods which can be used and thrown away. We have started a throw-away culture. This tendency is seen on the level of individuals and whole societies; and it is being promoted! In circumstances like these, solidarity, which is the treasure of the poor, is often considered counterproductive, opposed to the logic of finance and the economy. While the income of a minority is increasing exponentially, that of the majority is crumbling. This imbalance results from ideologies which uphold the absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation, and thus deny the right of control to States, which are themselves charged with providing for the common good. A new, invisible and at times virtual, tyranny is established, one which unilaterally and irremediably imposes its own laws and rules. Moreover, indebtedness and credit distance countries from their real economy and citizens from their real buying power. Added to this, as if it were needed, is widespread corruption and selfish fiscal evasion which have taken on worldwide dimensions. The will to power and of possession has become limitless.

Concealed behind this attitude is a rejection of ethics, a rejection of God. Ethics, like solidarity, is a nuisance! It is regarded as counterproductive: as something too human, because it relativizes money and power; as a threat, because it rejects manipulation and subjection of people: because ethics leads to God, who is situated outside the categories of the market. God is thought to be unmanageable by these financiers, economists and politicians, God is unmanageable, even dangerous, because he calls man to his full realization and to independence from any kind of slavery. Ethics – naturally, not the ethics of ideology – makes it possible, in my view, to create a balanced social order that is more humane. In this sense, I encourage the financial experts and the political leaders of your countries to consider the words of Saint John Chrysostom: "Not to share one's goods with the poor is to rob them and to deprive them of life. It is not our goods that we possess, but theirs" (*Homily on Lazarus*, 1:6 – PG 48, 992D).

Dear Ambassadors, there is a need for financial reform along ethical lines that would produce in its turn an economic reform to benefit everyone. This would nevertheless require a courageous change of attitude on the part of political leaders. I urge them to face this challenge with determination and farsightedness, taking account, naturally, of their particular situations. Money has to serve, not to rule! The Pope loves everyone, rich and poor alike, but the Pope has the duty, in Christ's name, to remind the rich to help the poor, to respect them, to promote

them. The Pope appeals for disinterested solidarity and for a return to person-centred ethics in the world of finance and economics.

For her part, the Church always works for the integral development of every person. In this sense, she reiterates that the common good should not be simply an extra, simply a conceptual scheme of inferior quality tacked onto political programmes. The Church encourages those in power to be truly at the service of the common good of their peoples. She urges financial leaders to take account of ethics and solidarity. And why should they not turn to God to draw inspiration from his designs? In this way, a new political and economic mindset would arise that would help to transform the absolute dichotomy between the economic and social spheres into a healthy symbiosis.

Finally, through you, I greet with affection the Pastors and the faithful of the Catholic communities present in your countries. I urge them to continue their courageous and joyful witness of faith and fraternal love in accordance with Christ's teaching. Let them not be afraid to offer their contribution to the development of their countries, through initiatives and attitudes inspired by the Sacred Scriptures! And as you inaugurate your mission, I extend to you, dear Ambassadors, my very best wishes, assuring you of the assistance of the Roman Curia for the fulfilment of your duties. To this end, upon you and your families, and also upon your Embassy staff, I willingly invoke abundant divine blessings. Thank you.

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Well, there you have the catholic leader's lead. Not quite "helpful stuff about relevant areas of concrete application" that you, or the ambassadors, might welcome. What lead might I give here in regard to this problem, in regard to this speech? My suggested application now is you applying yourself concretely to the tough fantasy of what might replace the vague Papal Niagara sentiments.

Let me put it this way. In Q/A 44, "An Added Context to *Method*, Chapter One," I suggested moving stuff out of the final chapter of *Method* and into chapter one. That leaves us with a GAP, a communal existential gap, in the final chapter. It is the GAP noted almost hopelessly in Lonergan's musing about Cosmopolis in the 1930s, in *Insight*, in the dark struggle towards a sketch of the solution.<sup>10</sup> But now I would have you muse over his answer in the 21 page-salute of *Method* Chapter 5: I would have you cherish that musing as "a relevant area of concrete application." The cherishing can lead to you, a new island of meaning, grounding a replacing of

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<sup>10</sup> Add the context of notes 6 and 10. Lonergan's full drive of inquiry was way out of the mindset of the Church and indeed quite beyond studies of society. Futurology is recognized as a frail undeveloped discipline. Imagine then the unacceptable character [in every sense] of dividing futurology not just into four disciplines of the future but into eighth with a feedback structure. Useful here is to take seriously the climbing ladder of eight collaborations of collaborations mapped on page 109 of the book mentioned in note 2.

the Niagara of sentiment of Pope and Lonerganists by incarnating a constructive ethos of crisis that would be the seed of an articulate nudging towards what is needed.

My problem recurs: I cannot re-write *Method* any more than I can rewrite *Insight*: and anyway, let us not be any more optimistic about a new 1,000 page *Method* than the optimism created by the glib reception of *Insight*. How then might you muse creatively? You might start with your local streets, your town council, the greedy money makers, etc., not as an activist but as musing over what might really work. You could begin to share Lonergan's vision, broadening his view of "making the practical economist as familiar a figure as the doctor."<sup>11</sup> It is going to be a long road to "find a new basis both for finance and for foreign trade,"<sup>12</sup> but now at least should we not, in global hope, muse effectively over the beginnings of the road? I am asking you to join with me and Mooney of my 14<sup>th</sup> chapter of *The Road to Religious Reality*. "'Stop!' Mooney yelled over the trading floor."<sup>13</sup> But I am not asking you to invade Wall Street: I am asking you to speak out – but from your serious concrete next-month musings – on the trading floor of Lonergan studies.

Your serious musings have to bring you mindingly forward – not alone but with colleagues that are at least slightly sickened by "a class closed in upon themselves ... become effete,"<sup>14</sup> – to envisage what implementation in the sense of C<sub>9</sub> needs. It needs the backup of **an astonishing eightfold layering of mediations right up to a full fantastic restructuring of both secular social studies and studies of ecclesiology**. But the musing needs to start with you thinking out your local helplessness in the face of the task of changing your local teachers and preachers, mayors and bankers.

I have talked of this too much and indeed too ineffectively before. Still, I would note that it was a bent that lead to the founding of SGEME: the need for local commonsense reflection, perhaps tinged with action, that would backfire<sup>15</sup> into the larger needs that are to be met in FS<sub>8</sub>, whose larger needs are to be met by FS<sub>7</sub>, and so on back through the other specialties, round to the ongoing subtle noticing of local needs that tie in with the slogan "this deserves recycling."

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<sup>11</sup> Lonergan, *For A New Political Economy*, CWL 21, 37.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *The Road to Religious Reality*, 40.

<sup>14</sup> *Method in Theology*, 99.

<sup>15</sup> "Backfire" is a word used previously with a broader meaning than gun-response. I used it in introducing the possibilities opened up by SGEME. See Fusion 9 "Functional Marketeers in Economics" (available at <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/fusion-09.pdf>). Serious practicality, even raised as a commonsense issue, should backfire into the need for larger zones of thinking. How large? Eventually to seven other functionally collaborating groups. You get a sniff of the whole dynamic from my Archival essay, "Arriving in Cosmopolis" (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/archive8.pdf>).

SO: I am offering you the concrete application that is towards “a new self-creating self-imaging in the Tower of Able.”<sup>16</sup> Certainly there are a range of other out-reaching applications that each of you can think of and move into, but obviously the important one in my mind is the fermenting in Lonergan studies of a mood that is critical of the rut, the wonderfully scholarly rut, that has been worn into a side-road to, or perhaps just a distraction from, progress. My quotation just now draws attention to a piece of my own speech to potential ambassadors not to African nations but to Lonergan conferences. My speech, unlike the Pope’s, is unashamedly doctrinal, within FS<sub>6</sub>: and, sadly, there are no supporting structures of FS<sub>7</sub> or FS<sub>8</sub> to carry it to conferences or colleagues. Behind it, within it, is a heuristics that perhaps you now can wonder at and about: the heuristics of a geohistory<sup>17</sup> of an eightfold mediation that is to shape up slowly on the long road to Cosmopolis. So why not end with a piece of that appeal, so that your imagination might ferment around about it and bubble out noisily regarding and guarding that wondrous emergence in the midst of reluctant and settled colleagues. I leave out the terrifying footnotes in the original text.

“What is to emerge is a **Towering** control of the spacetime of meaning in its full aggregformic dynamic. Fibre-bundle geometry will breed an image-adequate fulsome heuristic of the geohistorical complexity of local and personal viewpoints, so that we no longer speak vaguely of ongoing, overlapping etc contexts, but gear up to the impossible dream of the second canon of hermeneutics. There is to be a new self-creating self-imaging in the Tower of Able. ‘It is, I fear, in Vico’s phrase, a *scienza nuova*.’<sup>18,19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *The Road to Religious Reality*, 49.

<sup>17</sup> Page 6 of Q/A 36, “An Appeal to Lawrence and to Other Elders” (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/qa-27.pdf>) is a start on imaging this geohistorical heuristic.

<sup>18</sup> Lonergan, in a book review, *CWL* 20, 223.

<sup>19</sup> *The Road to Religious Reality*, 48-49.