

Q. 55 Functional History: the First Sentence

Q. 55 (June 11th) My interest is in contributing something that would be in the functional specialty of history, but it seems quite impossible to even imagine where to start, even with your nudges in Answer 53. Lonergan's two chapters are not a great help to me, and I find obscure your emphasis on his later (*Method*, 250) contrast between Ranke and Burckhardt. Any further leads? My interest is contemporary history, not then ancient or medieval philosophy etc.

A. 55 Oddly, you may find my treatment of *The Sorrows of Empire*¹ in the next question more concretely suggestive, regarding your modern interest, than what I say here, but I find it convenient to tackle your question broadly and foundationally first. It is true that the two chapters on history are not a great help, and that the Ranke/Burckhardt contrast is obscure. Let's start with that contrast and weave our way into some glimpse of the obscurity and then of the road forward. Of course I will be repeating points made previously but there are fresh refined points to be made. Note, however, the ambiguities of reading. If you are seriously with me, then what I write are doctrinal nudges in FS₆; if you are a beginner then it is read more like the encouraging that comes from good *haute vulgarization* bubbling from FS₈.

Further, this writing here is a pale shadow of a pre-foundational effort to be associated with the top of page 250 of *Method*, a dialectic lift regarding history that centers on the contrast Ranke/Burckhardt, so let us start there.

My use of the phrase "in the style of Burckhardt rather than Ranke"² is very much symbolic gesture, begging larger foundational questions, like the – to me quite neat! – imaging suggested by talking of **The Leaning Tower of Able**. What is being suggested is a lean-forward attitude in the entire first four specialties, one that displays itself best in reflections on the human function of history: getting relevantly at the facts of finitude.

Let me emphasize the seriousness of our reaching here by recalling Lonergan's long struggle with the problem of "System and History."³ It seems to me now, as I look back over his climb, that a breakthrough to a solution is practically impossible without a serious absorbing of the feedback potential of his 1965 division of labour.

¹ Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic*, Metropolitan Books, 2004.

² *Method in Theology*, 250.

³ As well as the various courses and their notes from Rome, there is the climb in the beginnings of the various versions of his treatment of the Trinity, beginning with his 1957 *Divinarum Personarum Conceptio Analogica*. CWL 12 gives the material.

But let us get at this pedagogically by returning to the problems – and imagings – of treating the sick patient, the sick puppy, the sick sapling. You and the vet are interested in bringing the sick puppy forward to health – not, then, “back” to health. Between the two of you, you struggle with the story of the pup. Your shared interest in the story is in the pup’s moves forward in life. “She fell into the pig-sty: now isn’t that interesting” is not the ball park of your concern: the concern is what bugaboo may have been lurking there or lurking in the gene pool. Let us suppose that the vet, like Dr. Gregory House in the TV series *House*,⁴ is really up-to-date on puppy’s brains, bones, bites – given and taken – whatever. Indeed, on this puppy’s life so far, and on puppy’s “in general”⁵ as they leap, stride, stumble through their version of a shakestalean life.⁶ The “in general” covers the multitude of the past’s discoveries about this type of dog’s sickness and health.

How does it cover it? That obviously depends on the maturity of the understanding of this type of care. But I would have you pause seriously over my introduction here of the word *care*. We are talking about pragmatics here, anticipating your growing grip on the full meaning of the seventh specialty as a genetic⁷ systematics of care, better called *Pragmatics* than *Systematics*.

Now we are in trouble here, but I wish to slip past complexities in our preliminary venture. Let us envisage a decently wise vet, Annie,⁸ an informed dog-tuned lady perhaps not unlike Miss Marple⁹ or like a first-rate tennis coach who appreciates both the game and the gametogenesis.

⁴ See *The Road to Religious Reality*, p.32, in a chapter relevant here, on “Doctrines.” If the program is unfamiliar it is easy enough to find some parallel zone of consultative competence and detect the character of that competence.

⁵ *General* is a tricky word. Useful here is a return to Pierrot Lambert and Philip McShane, *Bernard Lonergan, His Life and Leading Ideas*, Axial Publishing 2010, 243-250, on general history and functional history. I am, however, much clearer now on functional history and on the rewrite of the two chapters in *Method* than I was in my puppy-youth of 2010.

⁶ My horrid pun recalls Jaques’ “all the world’s a stage” of *As You Like It*, Act 2, scene 7, 139-166. But does not some new Shakespeare have to tackle the character of fuller stages of accelerating minding, so that old pups can be sensed to have a larger woof and better vessel-warp?

⁷ The subtle way in which counterpositions are reversed and built into the systematics is way beyond the scope of this short answer. The full systematics eventually will carry a penumbra of probability-schedules around the tubes of the geohistorical mapping.

⁸ I am thinking here of the type represented by Annie Sullivan with her five patient weeks devoted to getting Helen to leap onto the human road to health. See my *A Brief History of Tongue*, 31-36 for a patient invitation to leap towards luminosity regarding that leap that becomes a neglected, truncated, spontaneous reality of signing.

⁹ I recall, on her detecting lady, Miss Marple, Agatha Christie, *The 4.30 from Paddington* (Collins, London, 1987), “Fluffy and dithery in appearance, but inwardly as sharp and shrewd as they make them” (p.18); “‘my own process of reasoning was not really original,’ said Miss Marple. ‘It’s all in Mark Twain. The boy who found the horse. He just imagined where he would go if he were a horse and he went there and there was the horse.’” (103). Can we find the horse, the foal, the pup, in ourselves and in our story, and go there?

Let us push this to a brilliance level and indeed to the level of say 2050 A.D., and consider that she has a grip on the genetic dynamics of the dog and the genetics of views on the genetics of dogs, the correction of flaws in those views having been built into her view. You might say, as she observes now this puppy, that she is “mistress of all she surveys.” Try, desperately and sweatily,¹⁰ to imagine her control of meaning. She is not really mistress of all she surveys, but she is “at the level of the times”¹¹ and “at the level of her age.”¹² And so, she can give a decent account of the pup to date, and the pup’s next days of care.

Back now, or on feebly, to the tadpole, the pup, the sapling, that is history. Are we here in the zone of Voegelin’s *Order and History*, or are we rather brooding more concretely over an Annie community that would emerge now and care for *Mankind and Mother Earth*?¹³ In what mad sense might we talk of an Order that would lift Voegelin’s reflections into mankind’s earthwoof; that would, say, lift his Chinese Ecumene into a story weaving towards a possible, probable, world dominance by 2050 A.D., and colour that story’s weaving?¹⁴ To that impossible dream we shall return in the next question. Here I would rather gather our hintings into the context of Lonergan’s struggle with System and History, a struggle that needs the treatment of a lengthy FS₂ book – indeed a doctorate thesis: hint, hint! But here let us muse over the strange reach to bring effective order to history. The phrase, order and “history, is employed in two senses. There is history (1) that is written about, and there is history (2) that is written. History (2) aims at expressing knowledge of history (1).”¹⁵

I have quoted the first sentence of the beginning of Lonergan’s two-chapter discussion of history, but have I not given you a sudden lift, a naked Archimedean spasm, in the discovery of a new beginning for the treatment of functional history?¹⁶

Perhaps not. Perhaps you need to pause over our puppy problem, so that you can strive again to get “the whole thing right in your intellectual paws, so to speak.”¹⁷ What I wish you to get

¹⁰ Cantowers 7, “Systematics and General Systems Theory” (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/cantower7.pdf>) and 8, “Slopes: An Encounter” (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/cantower8.pdf>) could help work up a neurosweat.

¹¹ *Method in Theology*, 350.

¹² *Ibid.*, 351. I like to misread age here in relation to elderhood and incarnate character.

¹³ Arnold Toynbee’s last compact volume.

¹⁴ I am referring to Voegelin’s second last volume, *The Ecumenic Age*, at the conclusion of which he has things to say about the Chinese ecumene.

¹⁵ *Method in Theology*, 175.

¹⁶ For me, this leap completes my efforts to envisage there-writing of *Method*. But how to shorten the climb for others? The Archimedean leap of the first page of *Insight* took me the work of Cantower 27 (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/cantower27.pdf>), section 2 to play out the leap. A question, as I note in note 18, not just of making your mouth water but of making you remember the future.

¹⁷ *Phenomenology and Logic*, CWL 18, 357.

into your system – ho, ho am I not disgusting with my puns! – is the new meaning of “**aims at expressing knowledge of history**”¹⁸ or her – the puppy’s – story. The **aim** is startlingly fresh indeed – when you have it in your intellectual paws – it lifts your meaning of the dominant psyche of any functional specialist that is expressed in the symbol-set FS + UV + GS.¹⁹

But do you not sniff, puppy-person, a new sent, bent? The vet “aims at expressing knowledge” that is going to work wonders – well, microwonders – in the little dog. The great veterinary community of the tower has a powerful systematic-pragmatics of dog-care, “fruit to be borne”²⁰ to get the tale wagging “better.”²¹

Do I need to spell out the parallel with the problem of “Order and History,” “History and System”?

But now I hurry back to the point made earlier about this problem, that “a solution is practically impossible without a serious absorbing of the feedback potential of his 1965 division of labour.” You have to envisage a cycling of collaboration that collects improved systematization of the ongoings of history such that there is a continued statistical improvement in the effective detection of “fruitful ideas” and of the glocal dynamics of lonelineses, all within their layered social structures. It is that GS – or perhaps I should write HGS? – that is to dominate the control of historical investigation. Here I am being wildly compact: we need those two new chapters of *Method* as a beginning, and I cannot resist quoting Isaac Babel’s ‘The Beginning’: “the path, dear dreamer, is strewn with nails, mostly of the larger sort If you are weak they will buy and

¹⁸ Here we are now, at the middle note of 35 notes, faced with a reading of the boldfaced phrase from the beginning of Lonergan’s two tired, poorly-placed chapters on history, a reading which, when ingested, lets you re-write those chapters in cyclic attunement with Lonergan’s dream. But what do you make of my Annie-like invitation? (see note 8 above). Might my signing, perhaps over five weeks, make **you mouth water** as Helen did, so that you can even sketch the two new chapters, starting your own little whirlpool in a new Vorticism a hundred years after Ezra Pound’s first shot at it? Might you react to my palaver as the arranger Bobby Tucker did to Nadia Boulanger’s piano-playing of the *Firebird*? “She was as sharp as a razor. She played energetic, like a teenager, just zipped through the piece. Then she turned to the class and said, ‘Now, clap the rhythm of the second violin.’ We clapped the part and she stopped us right away. She said, ‘No, no. *No retard!* Stravinsky told me himself!’ That just flipped me out. I’m just a little raggedy-ass motherfucker from Morristown, New Jersey, ain’t I? What am I doing here? I peeked over at Quincy and I saw that he got it too. He was thinking the same thing that I was thinking. I leaned over to him and whispered, ‘Stravinsky told me himself!’ And Quincy whispered back, ‘damn right, mademoiselle.’ Q. *The Autobiography of Quincy Jones*, Doubleday, New York, 2001, 124. Tucker is the writer of this chapter. So, go, have a go: clap the rhythm that cuts our Lonerganism’s *retard!*

¹⁹ *FuSe* 10, “Contexts of Functional Interpretation” (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/fuse-10.pdf>) is the essay to muse over for all this. Section 3 there has the title “FS + UV + GS”.

²⁰ *Method in Theology*, 355.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 251.

sell you, harass you and lull you to sleep, and you wilt while pretending to be a tree in bloom.”²² The full bloom? “It is only within the full view that can be grasped ... the role of Christianity in world history.”²³

The full bloom’s statistics of emergence depends on the detailed gallant nail-fighting, “yes, I said, Yes, I will, Yes”²⁴ that generates some skeleton guides to global health. Lonergan talks of “the full view,” and, dear dreamer, that view is summed up in “The Tower of Able: Lonergan’s Dream.”²⁵ But the diagramming he has left to others. That diagrammed view, in its seed, I have called W_3 , but in its fullness I would risk calling it W_{27} , and its secular partner I would call W_{26} .

Why W_{26} ? First, of course, it numbers the end of the alphabet. But also it numbers the end place of the development of a heuristic understanding of nature.²⁶ It will differ from W_{27} in the top line: instead of $3P + SH...$ It will have $XP + SH ...$, since the number of divine personalities naturally known is indefinite.²⁷ The same would hold also for a secular W_3 . Also, 27, as you no doubt know, conveniently marks the transition, from the 26th place to Thomas’ 27th question in the *Summa Theologica*, “The Hypothesis of Intelligible Emanations in God.”²⁸

But what is to be the content of W_{27} ?

I have been struggling with its development since 1966, when I first suggested a Markov structured diagram of world process.²⁹ More recently I have sought to build in such flow structures or tubes as would control Lonergan’s suggestion of ongoing, overlapping, merging,

²² I am quoting from the text as given in the Frontispiece of my *Pastkeynes Pastmodern Economics. A Fresh Pragmatism* (Axial Publishing, 2002). This little book, obviously, deals with the sick puppy, and, in later chapters, with healing moves.

²³ *Method in Theology*, 128. It is the page in which history is talked about so briefly.

²⁴ I quote Molly Bloom’s final words, ending *Ulysses*.

²⁵ See P. Lambert and P. McShane, *Bernard Lonergan. His Life and Leading Ideas*, Vancouver: Axial Publishing, 2010, 163.

²⁶ “In the twenty-sixth place, God is personal.” *Insight*, 691. Not quite the end, but decently symbolic for our purposes.

²⁷ This point, lurking in Lonergan’s 26th place, opens a sympathetic way to larger religious dialogues. But it also nudges us to attend more refinedly to the personalities of a Christian God, and even to possibilities such as those Thomas envisaged in the beginning of the Third Part of the *Summa*.

²⁸ This is the title of my article on the topic in *Theological Studies* 23 (1962), 545-568: a useful start on Lonergan’s CWL 12.

²⁹ See my *Randomness, Statistics and Emergence*, Gill Macmillan And Notre Dame, 1970, 237. The context of the chapter, “Probability Schedules of Emergence of Schemes,” is obviously relevant. The Markov structure can be imaged as a flat moving world-map or as spherically-coordinated from $r = 0$ at the surface of the earth.

etc. contexts.³⁰ But here is certainly not the place to venture into beginnings and paths to maturing.³¹

I note, concluding abruptly, that what we desperately need to support the struggle to **W₂₇** is a **W_i** that gives the genetic dynamics of the puppy or the plant.³² Of course, we desperately need a sense of the need, an ethos of crisis³³ in Lonergan studies, an effective sense of “all that is lacking.”³⁴ However, the proximate issue for my questioner, and for all who say **yes, boldface** or not³⁵ to my boldfaced question, is how to make little starts. Why not leave that to your imagination, later aided, perhaps, by the next Q/A?

³⁰ Section 1 of **Q/A 36** “An Appeal to Fred Lawrence and Other Elders” (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/qa-27.pdf>) enlarges on this in the context of what was mentioned in the previous note.

³¹ The last 8 *Posthumous* essays have sufficient nudges, but most of all we need to keep in mind the long global communal spiraling involved. Recall that first quotation from Lonergan – from which the title comes – in *Posthumous* 15, “Spiraling Upwards towards an Ever Fuller View” (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/posthumous-15.pdf>).

³² There is the giant challenge of turning the doctrines of *Insight* 489ff into detailed systematics.

³³ I am recalling Lonergan’s *Topics in Education*, CWL 10, appealing to you to push for a recovery, “an apprehension of the group’s origin and story ... especially in a crisis.” (230)

³⁴ *Insight*, 559.

³⁵ Boldface type was used first by me in the Field Nocturne 41 essay-series (a long commentary on *Insight* 489 available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/fieldnocturnes.html>) as strategy of lifting consciousness to the problem of being luminously positional, the shock e.g. of **finding this print behind your eyeballs**. I do not think that functional collaboration requires such positioning; indeed its beginnings do not require the self-identification of levels of consciousness.