

q. 2 : relieving robotics

q. 3 : talk in biosemiotics

q. 4 : “to whom are you talking?”

Q. 2: you used a strange expression in answering Terry Quinn: “relievingly robotic”: would you please enlarge on it? (Sandy Gillis; James Duffy; also an anonymous questioner was somewhat more challenging in connecting my words to the set patterns of a laundry operation criticized by Lonergan).

A. 2: (June 2) I am happy to have brought out the “fixed pattern” objection. As we move along with our search for “the fixed creative patterns” of collaboration we will begin to appreciate not just the significance of symbolism [think of the robotics of going from  $d^2s/dt^2$  to  $d^3s/dt^3$ ] but the complex of simpler linguistic hints that we want to develop. I am trying to keep these answers short, hints towards musings. So, I add a neat linguistic pointer that in fact belongs to transfers in all functional zones. Think of someone writing on Jones in relation to Lonergan, picking out some good things from Jones. Such writing, such papers, are standard in Lonergan conferences. And the papers generally end with stray questions. BUT say the paper ended, or the questions suggested: “this deserves interpretation” [on in general ..... please don’t get into it yet ... some other functional focus]. The three words marvelously locate the paper. If they were sung out at the end of the presentation, like a Greek Chorus or a Baptist Choir, it would certainly help in “eliminating totalitarian ambitions” (*A Second Collection* – the Florida Interview: 213). It would shift the statistics of “cumulative and progressive results” (*Method in Theology*, 4,5). So, yes, there is to be a simple laundry aspect to functional cycling. AND when Jones’ point is known to be already in the Standard Model, the chorus might shift to a solo or a duet singing “this does not deserve further cycling”. But the mess of the missing standard model introduces all those hairy questions that we struggled with in the Fuses on Functional Research. So I leave it at that for the moment.

Q. 3. The zone of biosemiotics would seem a place for the functional talk that is your focus: any suggestions? (Daniel Mayer).

A. 3. (June 2) Yes, some suggestions, ones that fit in with a general beginners’ efforts here. But first, for the uninitiated, you might check out <http://www.biosemiotics.org> , and you’ll get a description and also leads to activities... a meeting in June in Finland,

later in China, etc etc .... a pretty active interdisciplinary group, involving "cognitive science" + the sciences all the way down through biology to chemistry and physics.

Suggestions? If you are, like Daniel, in that ball park, then [1] think out the full eight-zone answer to the question, "What is biosemiotics?" There is a difficulty there that is common to all zones, very evident when you ask "what is physics?" You need to consider the question in its fullness of "appliedness", and so of forward talking. So, in the zone of biosemiotics, one must think of the future outreaching, and thus on to recycling of successes and correction of failures. Identifying the divisions? Not difficult. There is the story of data at the beginning and the swing through beyond history to the "where are we at normatively" and on to policy, planning and executive focus on local efforts. Like the auto-factory there can be identified 8 generic types of talk. Persuading the people in the zone to advert to the types as the basis of convenient progressive work: that is another matter.

Notice that I have so far avoided issues of foundations or "reform". That is to be an inner business of the zone in its cycling process. Here there is grounds for optimism. There is no point indirect arguments with a truncated cognitive: the real argumentor is history in its recycling.

But history – and the interdisciplinary bent of biosemiotics within it – can twirl into the cycle disturbances of self-discovery. I take only a central example of "existential gap" – one that the zone has in common with linguistics. The central interest is in SIGN. To handle the subtle distinctions here [e.g. how is it a sign to the hawk that the prey is flagging?] one must get into the self-investigation of the Helen Keller business: see *A Brief History of Tongue*, 31-37). This is a tough exercise that should be a key part of Introductory Linguistics, and it is not. Indeed, it should be a key piece of a first course on Lonergan – or rather, on self-appropriation – and it is not. How, then, is it to enter biosemiotics? History's way is through the sloping (see *Cantower* 8, section 1.4) interdisciplinary interplay cycling through common foundations .... One zone has to find the discomfort of its absence: then it can spread.

Perhaps that zone will be biosemiotics? The need there is urgent, if there is to be clear searchings of the physio-chemistry of attractions that grounds the lower semblance of sign-making. A chemical catalyst, for example, "points to" accelerations of reactions, and such catalysis is present in more complex forms. Think, for example, of potassium triphosphate and signs of tiredness. The watching subject can identify, in an animal, signs of tiredness: but the watching subject who is not self-luminous re the grounds of signing will muddy talk of such signing, or of the signings involved in animal courtship or

plant thirsting. The truncated subject is most likely to import the mis-direction of the talk from information-theory.

Q. 4. From Tom Halloran: Tom made a good suggestion some years ago re asking people “to whom are you talking?” Now he raises the right-on question of the connection between that and this new move, re functional talk.

A. 4. (June 2). The connection is – ho ho – obvious, if you see it. Instead of the Greek Chorus mentioned in A.3, there is the solitary voice in the crowd asking Tom’s question. The difference with what I am pushing for is that I am trying to get us to find our way effectively into functional collaboration from our present mess which is especially associated with the “totalitarian ambitions” that Lonergan spoke of in the Florida Interview. So you could take Tom’s suggestion into my context by saying to the paper-giver, for example, “are you talking to your fellow-researchers? Are you talking to the interpretation community?”

But now think of the poor scholar - let us call ‘it’ Alpha - at the conference looking at Tom, or at the Chorus: not happily, I would say. Alpha was just talking in an undifferentiated way [Alpha sometimes claims to be taking in various functional specialties] and, slightly, in a totalitarian way. Alpha, say, has talked of Jones and Lonergan on X. Regularly Jones is not the same ball-park as Lonergan but the deeper trouble is that Alpha may not be either. Lonergan may have fleshed out and flushed out X e.g. in *Insight*. Alpha is excited because Jones has discovered that a comb run through hair picks up bits of paper, whereas Lonergan is talking about Maxwell’s Equations. This sort of problem turned up when we tackled functional research in the first ten *FuSes*: you can hunt there and find a collection of the “Existential Gaps” in Lonergan studies.

These Gaps can become topics. But my primary interest is people adverting to functional talk. Alpha is like someone in an auto factory making tires – even with supposed improvements - and floating them out generally across the workforce. You make an automobile by moving the tire to the wheelwright; and you can’t plan a new automobile on the basis of your work on a new tire. But I don’t want to tire my reader here. Enough hints for the moment.

Above I mentioned that “it’s obvious if you see it”. I have been plodding around this question since 1966. I am beginning to see what we all should have been thinking about and doing after the publication of *Method*. Nudges like Tom’s are needed to get us to see the messy state of our efforts to manufacture progress. But these nudges now need

to be introduced into the Conference Halls, into the reviewing of books and articles, even into the meeting in Boston on Saturday June 23 in exactly three weeks.