Functionally Interpreting Communications by Robert Henman
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Functionally Interpreting Communications[1]

My topic is interpretation of the 8th functional specialty, communications. There are four contexts which I have chosen for this work in order to make some effort at communicating what communication is within the larger context of functional specialization. There are many contexts within which communications can be discussed and I have worked out four which I list now. The first context is the explanatory context that is expressed in the text **Insight**.[2] The second context is the writings of Philip McShane.[3] The third context is functional specialization as outlined in **Method in Theology**. The fourth context is that of present Lonergan scholarship. The strategy is to offer an interpretation of the specialty communications[4] that may lead hopefully to a better understanding of implementation as the actualizing of explicit metaphysics.

Communications has more than one outcome. The task of communications is to communicate understanding to an audience and that understanding need be expressed differently to different audiences so one needs to have some grasp of the particular differentiation of consciousness of one’s audience. Within the context of functional specialization communications is to communicate the results of the other seven specialties[5] to either other specialists or to a non-specialist audience. Internal communication combined with external communication is to focus on making metaphysics explicit. Operators working in the various specialties are challenged to function in the explanatory horizon: **FS + UV + GS**.

I begin with a discussion of the last context of the present situation in Lonergan scholarship in order to set the stage for the drive of this paper. In the **first** place, the explanatory horizon of the book **Insight** has been bypassed and what has followed and continues is “pseudo-met myth”[6]. **Insight** is an explanatory expression of intentionality analysis and its implications for science, metaphysics and method in the sciences. In the **second** place implementation in the definition of metaphysics basically reaches to what Lonergan would eventually discover as functional specialization. In the **third** place, functional specialization has been generally ignored by Lonergan scholarship in terms of actually doing it. In the **fourth** place, present Lonergan scholarship for the most consists of comparing and contrasting what may be a position for some with the counterpositions of other philosophers. This set of research comments is something for interpretation, history and dialectic to work out, but they point to a present state that seems to have little to do with implementing Lonergan’s achievements. In the **fifth** place, **haute vulgarization**, quoting Lonergan as an authority, an unscientific procedure, has been the main pastime of the majority of follow-up to Lonergan’s achievements. In the **sixth** place, this activity has downplayed Lonergan’s achievements through forms of dialogue that do not communicate theoretical meaning, so the scientific community turn away, while the theological community continues on thinking it has it. In the **seventh** place, the very solution, that Lonergan outlined in **Insight** to renew culture, has now become the solution needed to rescue Lonerganism from itself. In the **eighth** place, there is the need to develop a form of communication for the various audiences referred to
above that will not only share the proper cognitive meaning but also be persuasive in ensuring the audience of the validity of the achievements as well as the insights essential to those achievements.

I list these eight “places” as if they exist as fact. Depending on the evidence one has accumulated for a judgment of fact one may be skeptical about my statements. They can be taken as research observations at this time. Some light may be provided by what I am saying here, and in the saying, my own struggle with understanding communications may shed light on a generic light on an all pervasive problem of the second stage of meaning that few, if any, should claim to have overcome. Indeed the making explicit would perhaps be revelatory. The achievement, the overcoming, is a precarious foothold that may only be secured by admitting the difficulties of living and reaching within the second stage of meaning.

Let us now return to the first context in our discussion, the text Insight. Throughout the text Insight Lonergan is quite explicit about the need to function in the explanatory horizon. He distinguishes between the horizons of common sense and theory by what appears as a very simple separation. The horizon of common sense relates things to oneself, and that of theory reflects on the relations between things. That seems simple enough. Is it so simple of a distinction that it encourages nominalism? In much of the Lonergan literature it would seem to have rated that position. And yet that distinction is contextualized throughout the text by examples of an explanatory nature. Why the emphasis on the explanatory horizon? Well, what does it mean to be in the explanatory mode of consciousness?

This is a major area of concern for it is more than just doing science; it consists of becoming aware of the heuristic that anticipates the scientific venture, of exposing ourselves in the process. I quote from Phil McShane’s contribution to this seminar the focus of the 7 articles. Our efforts signify the difficulty of this self-exposure.

A, from Quinn, is the challenge of thinking out spacetime properly - that word again. B, from Oyler, adds the challenge of thinking out the first part of Method properly. C, from Gillis, adds a helpful perspective on the gap between the first and the third stages of meaning: our Existential Gap (see CWL, vol. 18) can be startlingly and startlingly identified with a warped axial super-ego. D, from Zanardi, adds the massive challenge of seriously identifying that warp; E, from Duffy, points to an omnidisciplinary methodological luminousness that will boost the cycling, when it does move out of our axial treacle. F? Well, you are in it, as it identifies both the treacle-creep and the vortex-cycling of later times. And then there is G, from Henman, with some hints of the moves from treacle-creep to later whirling.

In Appendix F Phil highlights all of our efforts by offering pointers that should elevate all efforts towards a higher level of reaching for the explanatory context. And I see now that this higher level of reaching is tantamount to an interpretation of communications.

All of the 7 essays, and I include my own, express difficulty in interpreting various texts of Lonergan’s work. Such difficulty is not what one experiences if one does a perusal of Lonergan scholarship over the past 50 years. Let us think of this absence in two ways. First, there is the challenge of doing science with the heuristic in mind. Has that been the experience of
How is one to come to an appreciation of the explanatory horizon as the way forward, in a simple statement, by doing it? But that doing is the challenge. If I have no experience of the explanatory horizon, can I understand what Lonergan means by metaphysics, and if I have no idea what he means by metaphysics, can I understand what he means by implementation, and finally if I cannot understand what he means by implementation, can I understand the nature and relevance of functional specialization? This is extremely relevant to interpretation. In chapter 17, section 3 of *Insight*, the difficulty should be revealed. It was recently revealed to me in an earlier effort to offer a functional interpretation of implementation within the context of Lonergan’s definition of metaphysics. That effort was not without its merits. It revealed to me the consistency of Lonergan functioning in the explanatory horizon, my own inadequacy in that mode, as well as the need to grasp that mode if I was to adequately interpret the term implementation. We might reflect on our own need to parallel Lonergan’s own searching if we are to come to an adequate appreciation and understanding of functional specialization.

I have wrestled with elementary physics over the past 3 decades, partly due to Phil McShane’s nudging, and partly to my own curiosity about a subject I enjoyed in high school. It is a slow bit of progress in understanding. But the experience is quite different from other forms of understanding, common sense, etc... What did this teach me? That explanatory understanding is very difficult and yet without it am I functioning in the world of reaching for being? Can I understand what Lonergan meant by metaphysics without that experience? I don’t see how I can. The explanatory mode of operating provides one experience of self-transcendence. So to say we are self-transcending beings has no base without this experience.

I hesitate to go on about the need for the explanatory horizon as the making of the point tends to circle back to attempting to make the point over and over. But it relates to an interpretation of communication in as much as without the explanatory context just what are we communicating? Can collaboration exist without this context of communication? Are we able to subsume the second stage of meaning into the third without the explanatory context? I could go on in terms of further conclusions to end with a theological context in that the absence of the explanatory context inhibits cooperation with divine providence.

I wish to take up my second context which is the writings of Philip McShane. In footnote 3 I mentioned three articles that Phil published early in his life shortly after working through *Insight* and the Verbum Articles as they have become known. I no longer have a copy of his first article; *The Contemporary Thomism of Bernard Lonergan*. It has been lost through my poor filing system, or perhaps I loaned it out to a friend! The other two I have in my possession. In discussing the procedure of analogy as how to attempt an understanding of the
intelligible emanations in God, Phil states on page 557 (see footnote 3 for reference); A successful scientific hypothesis is an advance in understanding, and its success is measured by the degree to which its intelligible consequences account for what awaits explanation. The year is 1962 and Phil puts forth the need for explanatory work in understanding data adequately. In this instance the data is by analogy as there is no data on God. But the heuristic procedure is still explanatory in its reach. In *Theology and Wisdom*, Phil states on page 423 (see footnote 3 for reference); What is demanded is a transition from empirical self-knowledge to scientific self-knowledge, where the former is the basis of the latter. This point references my comment in footnote 9. To work through Phil’s writings over the past 50 years for further references to the need for explanatory work would be a horrific enterprise. But we might jump ahead to his two latest published works of 2010 to make a point. In *Sane Economics and Fusionism* [11] we read; The people in the Tower will share, to a very large degree, a Standard Model of Progress, one that is sophisticatedly explanatory and heuristic. In *Bernard Lonergan: His Life and Leading Ideas* [12] we read and I quote at length; The last section’s ending phrase may well sound like metaphor, yet it points to a future enlarged explanatory metaphysics bluntly yet subtly anticipated by Lonergan in Chapter 16 of *Insight*. The note to that phrase mentions Cantower 30, and so it seemed reasonable, in this impressionistic chapter, to avail of my effort there to lift us forward towards a glimpse of Lonergan’s suggestions regarding energy and the prime potency of finitude. The fuller context of the Cantower is obviously a better invitation to the struggle with Lonergan’s meaning; indeed the ingesting of the five interlocked Cantowers, 27-31, seems to me an unavoidable achievement of these next generations if we are to lift ourselves communally into an explanatory perspective, the Standard Model that might be a Tower Presence in a hundred years or so.

“To lift ourselves communally into an explanatory perspective”, echoes of 1961 and beyond? And finally most recent, in Phil’s contribution to this seminar, Appendix F, we read; BUT the powerful thing about cyclic functional collaboration is that identification means effective identification... One finds throughout over 50 years a consistency of Phil’s emphasis on the explanatory horizon as concomitant with Bernard Lonergan’s own emphasis. Now, does that ring of haute vulgarization? Only if one has not effectively discovered the Standard Model, made an effort at an explanatory account of something. Phil and I only yesterday shared humor over his puzzle presented in his Appendix F in wondering why the apple falls and the moon does not. It takes a bit of explanatory work to figure that out. Phil offers a hint in his Appendix F. But without a fair bit of effort in understanding velocity, acceleration, orbital paths, one never can adequately account for that phenomenon.

What contribution does this brief analysis offer in helping us to understand communication? Does it not again emphasize that communication within functional specialization is of the explanatory horizon and that implementation of an adequate metaphysics requires a structure, a Standard Model that can implement such a thing?

I move on now to my final context, that of functional specialization. To do this properly is to bring forth the central point made in the discussion of the former two contexts. The point brought out in both of those former contexts and discussions is that the explanatory horizon is the essence that underlies Lonergan’s achievements and that functional specialization is, I hold,
his greatest achievement, for within its dynamic resides the possibility of a collaborative explanatory control of meaning that has the potential to offer a control and direction of history, that Lonergan knew was so badly needed and that he so worked for from the 1930’s until his death in 1984.\[13\]

Within the context of functional specialization I earlier mentioned two types of communication, internal and external. Both are relevant to my topic but require separate treatment. We need bring the previous context of the explanatory horizon forward into this discussion. If functional specialization is to implement metaphysics each specialty needs to pass forward to the next specialty expressions resulting from the explanatory horizon. This series of cumulative internal communications provides for the specialty communications the data of external communication. That external communication need be developed means of sharing cognitive meaning in a manner that has the potential to persuade audiences that such meaning is relevant to the ongoing development of science and human well being. This expression also need be developed into a form that takes on the role of data for the specialty research ensuring that the cyclical dynamic of functional specialization continues in its cumulative potential.

The situation at present is that there is little data on communications as a specialty in the manner that I have described above. Sandy Gillis, in her paper, describes the struggle of moving from the second stage of meaning to the third and in order to initiate a beginning in this transition both internal and external communications need take up the challenge of the explanatory horizon. Bill Zanardi explores the neurochemistry in its development and its lack of cultivation in the axial period hinders development and can screen off the ability to recognize our ineffectiveness.

In conclusion we might ask: **What are we about here?** My effort to interpret the specialty communication along with the six essays that precede this one express not only the deficiencies of cultural fragmentation but the difficulty of overcoming such deficiencies. If we, (I), are to learn insightfully from our present ineffectiveness to follow up on Lonergan’s achievements, we must attempt what Lonergan attempted early in his life: reach up to the mind of someone else’s achievement.

After spending years reaching up to the mind of Aquinas, I came to a twofold conclusion. In the one hand, that reaching had changed me profoundly. On the other hand, that change was the essential benefit. For not only did it make me capable of grasping what, in the light of my conclusions, the vetera really were, but also it opened challenging vistas on what the nova could be.\[14\]

**What we are about** is reaching, and the natural reaching dynamic of our human quest is our way. Can we say that we have reached that experience of profound change? Can we even imagine that at some stage in history that some one, or more effectively, some collaborative group, might intelligently go beyond the mind of Bernard Lonergan? So, “while we await common cognitive agreement, (the standard model) the possible expression is collaboration...”\[15\]
It would be perhaps a worthwhile exercise now to reread my “observations” listed earlier in this paper within the context of all seven papers and stop to reflect as to whether they still warrant that description.

[3] Philip McShane, in his first three published articles; *The Contemporary Thomism of Bernard Lonergan*, Philosophical Studies, Ireland, 1961, *The Hypothesis of Intelligible Emanations in God*, Theological Studies Vol. 23, No. 4, December 1962, and *Theology and Wisdom Sciences Ecclesiastiques*, Vol. XI, 1963, was promoting a development of a method in theology within the context of the explanatory horizon. This emphasis on the explanatory is relevant to his later writings and possibly the adverse reaction by Lonergan scholars to much of his later writings.
[5] *Method in Theology*, page 355. “Without the first seven stages, of course, there is no fruit borne. But without the last the first seven are in vain, for they fail to mature."
[8] There is the self-transcendence of being in love and loving. The mediation of that loving in the world of proportionate being raises the issue of how and the second stage of meaning with all of its fragmentations complicates the “how” beyond our present fantasies.
[9] I wish to make a distinction here between intellectual conversion and theoretic conversion. The discovery that one knows the real in judgment is the essence of critical realism, but theoretic conversion is coming to an appreciation of what intellectual conversion points to, but without theoretic conversion, intellectual conversion can and will slip into philosophical mudslinging. The two conversions are distinct but complimentary. But they are not the same thing. Until one has explained some data, one does not have an experience that fills out intellectual conversion. Intellectual conversion is incomplete without theoretic experience. What Lonergan calls metaphysics then remains a definition that the real is a correctly
understood experience. It can be memorized but not explained and then pedagogy never rises to the challenge of noticing the difference between what is experienced and what is known in the invisible.

[10] This article has been posted on Philip McShane’s website at www.pmcshane.ca under the index title Archives. At present the file is corrupted and access is denied.


[13] See Patrick Brown’s Implementation in Lonergan’s Early Historical Manuscripts and System and History in Lonergan’s Early Historical and Economic Manuscripts at http://journals.library.mun.ca/ojs/index.php/jmda/issue/view/8 Also see Mike Shute’s Lonergan’s Discovery of the Science of Economics, University of Toronto Press, 2010. Chapter 8, Section 2, Further Contexts, page 233. I visited Lonergan at Pickering in August of 1984, 3 months before he passed away, and we had a brief discussion of his work in economics. He told me he was still working on it. For a brief discussion of this meeting and Phil McShane’s relevant context of that discussion to my above comment on Lonergan’s lifelong efforts see; Pierrot Lambert and Philip McShane, Bernard Lonergan: His Life and Leading Ideas, Axial Press, 2010, pages 253-54.

[14] Insight, page 769[748].