

Essays in Systematic Theology 38: The Ninth Functional Specialty¹

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I wish to suggest in this brief note that we divide what currently is the functional specialty ‘foundations’ into two specialties, ‘horizons’ and ‘categories.’ These two specialties would fulfill the tasks currently assigned to the specialty ‘foundations,’ namely, the objectification of conversion and the ongoing derivation of both general and special categories. But dividing these tasks into two specialties would have at least two advantages. First, it would acknowledge that these are two quite distinct tasks involving distinct methods. Second, it would respond to some of the difficulties raised by Lonergan’s recognition of a fifth (and even sixth) level of consciousness, in that the specialty ‘horizons’ would have as its objective the thematization of the normative subject in all its concrete dimensions, no matter how many so-called ‘levels’ that might eventually entail. The present location of the objectification of the normative subject in the structure of functional specialization runs the risk of a conceptualistic objectification, not of the normative subject at all but of a truncated subject. I am suggesting that ‘Horizons’ become a ninth functional specialty in generalized empirical method and in theological method in particular, one whose sole task it is to articulate the structure of the concrete universal that is the normative subject.

But how does this suggestion relate to the structure of the functional specialties as we know it? The ninth specialty, Horizons, would stand outside the other eight, since it objectifies the source of the movement from the functional specialties of the first phase to the functional specialties of the second. The normative subject is responsible for the movement from the specialties of the first phase – research, interpretation, history, and dialectic – to those of the second phase – categories, doctrines, systematics, and communications. The space that Lonergan provided in his chapter on Foundations for the tasks of what I am calling the specialty ‘horizons’

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is quite crowded. 'Foundations' in *Method in Theology* is assigned two quite distinct tasks with distinct methods. It seems to me that the articulation of the *first* set of both general and special categories, both of which are involved in the specialties of both the first and the second phase, should be assigned to a distinct specialty, Horizons. The derivation of other categories from this base would then fit into the structure of functional specialization as we know it, in a specialty called Categories. The ninth functional specialty as I conceive it would articulate the base of the general categories in generalized empirical method or interiorly differentiated consciousness and the base of the special categories in religiously differentiated consciousness. Thus, the major contribution to this ninth specialty is, and perhaps always will be, a little book called *Insight*. This specialty belongs neither to the first nor to the second phase, since it objectifies what is responsible both for authentic performance in either phase and for moving from the first to the second phase, namely, religious, moral, intellectual, and, I would add, psychic conversion.

The responsibility of the normative subject for moving from the first to the second phase has always been acknowledged in Lonergan's presentation of the specialties, from the very first draft of the specialties written in his hand, where it is called the 'mediating subject,'² to the articulation in *Method in Theology* itself, where it is 'foundational reality,' providing 'the added foundation needed to move from the indirect discourse that sets forth the convictions and opinions of others to the direct discourse that states what is so.'³ The language of *Method* obviously places the objectification of the normative subject in the functional specialty Foundations itself. I am suggesting simply that such objectification constitutes a distinct functional specialty outside the eight differentiated by Lonergan, a specialty I would call Horizons. Its sole task would be the objectification of 'the mediating subject,' 'the normative subject,' 'foundational reality.' The place in the structure currently assigned to a specialty called Foundations, the specialty that begins the second phase, I would call Categories. And since both

2 See the website www.bernardlonergan.com at 47200D0E060.

3 Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990) 267.

general and special categories are employed in *all* functional specialties, practitioners in the other specialties would constantly be moving into the work of Categories as they write their work, whether that work be exegesis, history, the mediation of conflicts, doctrines, systematics, or communications. This specialty would continue to fulfill the second task currently assigned in the chapter on Foundations, namely, deriving the general and special categories that are employed not only in Doctrines, Systematics, and Communications but also in Interpretation and History. In other words, I am suggesting that the present specialty Foundations be differentiated into two specialties, Horizons and Categories, and that the first of these be placed outside the framework of the other eight specialties, as the articulation of the motive force that propels the movement between the two phases.

The need for the distinction that I am suggesting is at least remotely analogous to the need for an expansion of the levels of consciousness beyond the three articulated in *Insight* to Lonergan's acknowledgment of a distinct fourth level soon after the publication of *Insight*. This need was experienced by many readers of *Insight's* chapter 18, who found the framework provided by cognitional theory, epistemology, and metaphysics too small, too restricted, for the content of a chapter on ethics, even as it does suggest *one* manner of making authentic decisions. In similar manner, much of the talk that has transpired over the question of a fifth level of consciousness acknowledges a similar straightjacket imposed by the four-level structure, this time on love, whether the love be the human love of family and community or the divine love that introduces us to a new and vibrant communion with the three divine subjects and that overflows into the self-sacrificing charity of the suffering servant in the world. There results the acknowledgment of a distinct, interpersonal level of personal consciousness. Human development begins with the primordial intersubjectivity or 'interdividuality' of psychic *Mitsein*. It passes through the individuation made possible by fidelity to the transcendental precepts in their call for the autonomy by which one gives the law to oneself. The law is precisely to be attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible. But development heads toward communion. At the distinct level beyond what this law calls for, one enters an interpersonal community of love,

where the beloved ones are in the consciousness of the lover by reason of love alone. That love always begins as a gift from others, human or divine. The subject in whom all of this has occurred – interdividuality, individuation through the transcendental precepts, and communion – approximates the normative subject, the concrete universal capable of effecting the movement from the phase of study that reports on what others have said and done, thus mediating from the past to the present, to the phase of creativity where one says and does what one knows is true and right, and so mediates from the present to the future. That normative subject is the focus of the ninth functional specialty, Horizons. The remote objective of the ninth specialty is the objectification of normative subjectivity in all its dimensions.

At one point in a question-and-answer session Lonergan envisioned the possibility of such a specialty, and named it Spirituality.⁴ I think this word as it is presently used connotes less than what is to be objectified when one articulates the concrete universal that is the normative subject. The ‘spirit’ that perhaps could be intended in the word ‘spirituality’ is closer to the *Geist* of Hegel’s *Phenomenology* than it is to narrow, descriptive, and parochially confined notions of ‘spirituality.’ It is true that I have employed the word ‘spiritual’ in rendering the meaning of *emanatio intelligibilis* as ‘autonomous spiritual procession,’ so we might risk at least provisionally using the word ‘spirituality’ for the ninth functional specialty, as long as we acknowledge that the specialty extends beyond the articulation of religiously differentiated consciousness to the objectification of intellectual, moral, and affective integrity as well. But I think the risk too great. The specialty Horizons envisions what in one place Lonergan calls the *Grund- und Gesamtwissenschaft*, the *scienza nuova* composed of cognitional theory,

4 These comments may be found on www.bernardlonergan.com in the transcript of the audio recordings of the Question and Answer sessions from the 1982 Lonergan Workshop at Boston College and in the corresponding transcription of that recording. See 9993ADTE080 for the relevant transcript.

epistemology, metaphysics, existential ethics, and the phenomenology of authentic religion.⁵ All of these are topics to be articulated in the ninth functional specialty. The normative subject articulated in that specialty propels the movement from the first phase of theology to the second. 'Spirituality' as this word is currently employed simply has too narrow a connotation to suggest all the tasks involved in objectifying the normative subject.

⁵ See Bernard Lonergan, 'Questionnaire on Philosophy: A Response,' in *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980*, vol. 17 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004) 355.