

Introduction to Volume 2

The purpose behind this volume is not to provide yet another top-down command-and-control structure for hierarchical institutions to pursue their own objectives, but to provide a means whereby individuals from all walks of life can work out what works for them in whatever situation they are in. It is to support the self-organizing properties of dynamic, complex, and open-ended systems operative in the population at large regardless of the efforts of powerful people and organizations to justify and rationalize their own drive for power—a power that can only be met through hierarchal institutions. It is an effort to support the efforts of a Divine Mystery engaging humans at a transcendental level of being, even though as human beings we can have no knowledge of these divine inspirations other than what has been revealed to us. And those revelations are startling indeed.

The problem with top-down control systems is that their creators and operators attempt to freeze reality through rules and regulations constructed around the known “facts” of the day. This brings to mind the man trying to erect a dam across a rapidly flowing stream using only clods of mud. In the end, water will go where it will go. Lies, deceit, gaslighting, etc. not only fail to stem the flood of insanity but create powerful justifications that only destabilized such top-down control systems. Combine this with the inbuilt bias of common sense people to get things down without taking broader issues into account—to kick the can down the road so to speak—and we end living our lives in a confused and confusing world in which little if anything makes sense and what is true cannot be known amidst a welter of narrative possibilities.

This period in history may not be what we think it is. There may be more going on than we can understand given our inherited conceptual tools—which is not to say they are wrong per se, but only that they may need to be complemented by further insights. It may be that the confusion and discord we experience as old institutional structures are being redefined are little more than artificial constructs derived from foundational stances firmly grounded in either the past industrial age or the often stagnant though comfortable structures of traditional cultures. In other words, we may be at a point in history where new and vastly more powerful and productive recurring schemes of operation are emerging, based on our developing understanding of dynamic, complex, and non-linear systems operative at a level exceeding the capacity of any one person to even begin to understand.

Volume 1 ended with a chapter on professional practice in an emergent reality yet to be known. Now practitioners operate within unique time-and-space-specific socio-political situations often during times of fundamental institutional change where the problem is to work out a reasonable and responsible method of reversing decline. It is taken for granted that such agents are called upon only when the organization or institution has run into problems that their own skilled people cannot solve, especially problems involving transdisciplinary and transcendental

realms of meaning. One such problem has to do with the ongoing fragmentation of meaning to the point where meaningful action is no longer possible due to fundamentally conflicting world views. It is too easy for any one group to stymie the others, leading to stalemate and gridlock. In the meantime, the situation continues to degrade—at least according to one narrative. Even there, agreement is well nigh impossible to achieve.

What do we mean by “fragmentation of meaning”? Let us take the notion of “capitalism” for example. The first problem is to gain an insight into the phenomena, into the recurring schemes of operation that we identify with the term “capitalism.” This involves a shift away from common sense and into the theoretical realm of meaning. We may note that any definition involves not the redistribution of wealth but also its creation, that it involves property rights defended by law, and that it places a strong emphasis on individual inventors and creators whose work brings value into the world.

While it *may* be possible to work out a common definition of the term “capitalism”, it is virtually impossible to agree on what such an economic system might *mean*. Is it a system that creates wealth where wealth did not exist, in which case it adds to the store of the human good? Is it the means whereby a few wealthy elites can dominate—enslave—those who work for them? Does its reliance on merit (equality of opportunity) destroy any possibility of an ideology of equality of outcome? Does its “creative destruction” mean the end of local communities governed by long-established traditions? Does it enslave those caught up in its “snare” to the material world at the cost of their humanity? Does it enhance human living or create wage slaves subject to the will of others? Is it good or bad, strong or weak, active or passive? Is “creative destruction” and the routine reconfiguration of industrial reality a plus or a minus? Do we have the right to use Gaia for our own selfish needs?

The narrative options are many.

Or take a beautiful sunset. To the artist in us, the dramatic colors associated with the setting sun may inspire feelings of awe and mystery. But to the environmentalist, its deep red colors mean the air is heavily polluted by man-made industries. And so it goes, a complexity of meaning that makes the emergence of a common appreciative system virtually impossible, where no meaningful consensus can ever be achieved. Under such conditions, force—or the threat of force—is the only way to get things done. But given the likelihood of an overt or covert backlash, this strategy is iffy at best.

All this discord has left us with a world dominated by a pandemic of false knowledge, of dishonest beliefs, of magical thinking, and deliberate gaslighting. The sand shifts beneath our feet as we no longer know whom to trust, whom to believe. The result is that we live in a biblical Tower of Babel of mutual incomprehension and distrust. Such is the state of a devolving good of order.

For now we note that any practitioner requires both a suitable horizon and language for the transdisciplinary and transcendental work at hand. Such a

disciplined and meaningful language must deal with the problem of maintaining control over meaning through a variety of common sense situations. As we shall find out, this is possible only if there is a radical shift to a higher perspective known as intellectual, moral, and religious conversion. Such a transition is never complete. It begins with the self-appropriation of oneself as a knower (intellectual conversion), the subject of Volume 1. Once the practitioner becomes open to the realm of interiority it becomes possible to adopt and assimilate a common appreciative system. Such a shift involves a vertical rather than horizontal change in one's horizon, a transition to a higher perspective that involves a radical transformation of the practitioner.

Why *is* meaning so problematic in our day and age? The reason will be worked out more fully in Volume 3, but for now we can say that the root cause lies in the tendency for intelligent people of common sense to get on with the business of the world using whatever means of rationalizing or justifying their actions that are available to them. They consider their practical expertise to be the final arbitrator in what should or should not be done. Now this might not be a problem if such intelligent and sane people were paying attention to long-term theological, philosophical, or other factors at play. But such people are totally confident in their expertise.

In the short term this would not be an issue. But in the long term it can bring a civilization to the brink of disaster, of a dark age in which all hard-won knowledge is discarded as no longer being relevant to daily life. The reason is quite simple: each individual plan or policy is supported by its own intellectual bubble that cuts it off from any broad universal perspective that might otherwise bring it into balance with other plans or policies. Over time, such a civilization falls into fragmented arenas of competing frames of reference that in many cases have no common point of contact. All this is complicated by the fact that people seeking or holding power have their own ways of justifying their special status in society and are equally blind to the broader implications of their ideology. Their efforts at self-justification pollute the common pool and continue to do so long after they are gone. Consider Karl Marx for example; his communist/socialist beliefs still echo around the world long after a century or more of experience has demonstrated the destructiveness of that way of evaluating and diagnosing social and political "realities."

Ever since early anthropologists such as Franz Boas or Margaret Mead made it culturally impossible to declare any one culture better than another, in our terms a counter-position that greatly helps politicians to maintain the peace, it has been impossible to appeal to one normative culture as the source of all meaning. Faced with a lack of common consensus, bureaucrats and politicians turned to the hard sciences as the ultimate appeal to what is or is not true. After all, scientists must contain the secrets of reality otherwise the technological products produced in their name would not work.

The odd result is that we live in a world of magic where *very, very* few people know how our technology works: we push a button and the lights come on, or tap

our smartphone screen and pull up the latest news seemingly out of the air. The thing is, if the few million people around the world that know how to make and maintain such artifacts were wiped out, civilization would collapse. This explains in part the incompetence displayed by self-proclaimed elites that live in self-enclosed bubbles that isolate them from reality. Value-signaling replaces meritocracy in the socio-political hierarchies; magical thinking replaces competency. (If we can put a man on the moon, then we can win this war on poverty.)

One critical problem in relying on hard science heuristic structures for controlling meaning is that the scientific empirical method cannot include the possibility of God. The very presence of such a transcendent entity would violate the empirical canon that negates any teleological influence for the simple reason that universal physical laws are no longer possible if some divine entity can alter them at will. Scientists can only appeal to concrete evidence drawn from the sensate world; they certainly cannot appeal to any god to explain how the universe operates. (The notion of intelligent design in evolution runs into this problem of an outside force playing with the universe.) The general effect is to deny the role of the transcendental in human affairs, a counter-position that leaves only material wellbeing as the only possible common area of agreement when it comes to what is truly of value. This leads to the strange belief that human beings, communities, organizations, and nations can be understood and manipulated in the same way that hard scientists seek to understand and manipulate the natural sensate world.

It also leads to a strange situation where rules and regulations propagated by a wide variety of governmental institutions may not reflect what can be affirmed, i.e., that they are grounded not in reliable positions but fundamentally flawed counter-positions. Such counter-positions are built from impossibilities and common sense wish-fulfillments that are so flawed they only make situations worse. The funny paradox is that an increasingly dysfunctional situation can be made to justify such counter-positions, thereby sending the organization, institution, or country into a tail-spin from which it may not recover. For example, the very disintegration due to failing plans and policies can result in a call for greater top-down control when the very roots of the problem lie in the attempt to impose ever greater control on the part of self-proclaimed elites.

It is possible to observe this scenario playing out in a wide variety of institutions concerned with power, authority, and influence where the notion of governing has been replaced by the desire to rule according to scientific principles. But this in itself is problematic as the empirical heuristic structure is constantly working at the frontiers of knowledge and while past achievements may not be overturned they are often reframed in a higher perspective – as Newton's laws are but a subset of the far wider explanatory theory of Einstein's general theory of relativity. Needless to say, such changes in what is scientifically known plays havoc with bureaucratic institutions devoted to applying scientific knowledge. It also distorts scientific understanding for the simple reason that such institutions pay for scientific work, and it is the rare individual or group that can present material that might cost them

future contracts. This subversive effect has been well noted in any research involving “anthropomorphic climate change.”

Such a technocratic mentality devoted to socio-political “laws” of power and control is divorced from the character development that drove prior attempts to improve society. It permits if not demands the emergence of untrained, untempered, and incomplete formation of one’s emotional life to the point where any idea of truth rests on individual feelings and subjective perceptions associated with common sense preoccupations with personal well-being and happiness. When this happens, there arise public demands for the resolution of any number of issues ranging from climate control, to historical injustices, and to equality of outcome, all to be “corrected” using the “rational” techniques developed in such social sciences as psychology, sociology, and economics—and perhaps above all, the political sciences. Magical thinking and value signaling rules the day in a world where men no longer have chests, i.e., T.S. Eliot’s hollow men.

In the end, governments are no longer capable of governing human beings but transform themselves into a bureaucracy obsessed with “rational” control through the sprouting of countless rules and regulations in an attempt to freeze time for their own benefit. In such a situation, the people at large have no choice but to rise in an act of rebellion as the “rational” regulators preoccupied with the applied social sciences stray into areas of imagination and fiction; their horizon is so limited, their group bias so strong, that they are not even aware of how far they have strayed from reality. What is “known” is largely make-believe, a false universe disconnected from reality. This state of affairs cannot end well, as various protest waves currently active around the world suggest.

Top-down regulatory and/or control systems belong to an early industrial age where large factories built around production lines were the norm, populations were far smaller than they now are, and global spanning systems were only starting to be put into place. However, such command-and-control systems do not fit the demands of highly complex emergent self-organizing systems that, when it comes down to it, do not respond well to command-and-control systems that require a dominating, powerful, and all-wise leader (or elite) to direct human affairs. Unfortunately (or fortunately) such capable people are few and far between, assuming they actually exist and are not pretentious and egotistical place-holder personalities taking on roles no single person is capable of fulfilling. Perhaps what is needed is a form of “collective intelligence” grounded in centuries of self-refinement and tested operations at a time when the required knowledge exceeds the capacity of any human brain.

By taking Lonergan’s transcendental method and functional specialization as a means of grounding meaning in reality, by using them as control mediators between the abstract story-telling we engage in to give meaning to our lives and current events, we seek to support not a top-down command-and-control structure but an emergent self-organizing reality created and maintained by vast groups of people. In Volume III we take up the task of how this might be accomplished through a

“Cosmopolis Institute” or “Academy”, but for now we restrict ourselves to the language within which such work could be accomplished.

We take up Lonergan’s transcendental method and functional specialization as a powerful method of separating truth from fiction, positions from counter-positions, and reality from fantasy and wishful thinking. In fact, the proposed language is grounded in Lonergan’s approach that includes his world process of emergent probability as well as his invariant structure of the human good. Together they form the *Schematic*, a technical document that lays out the fundamental concepts and operations of a common professional language that represents a shift to a higher perspective.

The *Schematic* is constructed in four strata that build upon each other. The base is Lonergan’s world process of emergent probability, which describes how the universe works. Above that level is Lonergan’s transcendental method and its isometric functional specialties that describes how we come to know both at the individual and collective level of intelligence. Then we consider the playing field of all human interests using Lonergan’s invariant structure of the human good. Finally we come to the upper strata involved in actualizing individual potential at each level of the human good. Together all four layers form a coherent high level language that applies to any and every human community.

Friedman’s transdisciplinary framework laid out at the end of Volume 1 (Refinements) provides a set of detailed concepts useful when it comes to filling in the details, but in itself does not replace the invariant structures embedded in the *Schematic*. His sixteen fundamental socio-political variables are grounded in the social science paradigm of social interaction. As you might recall, they include primary images of past, future, what it means to be human, and of social reality; structures of power such as institutions, organized groups, regulations, and power/authority/influence; social drivers such as economic interests, ideologies and utopias, divergent values/norms/demands, and the ubiquity of conflict/competition/co-operation; and individual factors such as character and personality types, experiential learning, creativity, and destructiveness.

Also laid out in the same section of Volume 1 is Friedman’s notion of professional practice as Orientation, Diagnosis and Evaluation, and estimating Scope and Constraints on rational action in unique time-and-space-specific socio-political situations undergoing fundamental institutional changes provide the practitioner with a specific set of operations necessary to work within the structure of the *Schematic*. In fact, the *Schematic* provides the precise top-level language within which these steps can be carried out with a high degree of success.

The *Schematic* allows practitioners to anticipate what there is to be known concerning any number of critical issues at play in any common sense situation. We need to understand how it can be applied to different critical problems, perhaps the most important being to understand how human beings can start their lives living as animals only to move over time to a spiritual control mediator. That is, we need an explanatory theory of human development that covers a person’s life-span—and

beyond. The challenge in creating such a theory is to frame it within the fundamental concepts and operations laid out in the *Schematic*. Once formulated, we need to consider the implications of such a theory when it comes to understanding fundamental doctrines, especially since this theoretical explanation is one that affirms the reality of a transcendental realm of meaning for a society that has lost the meaning but not the taste for such things.

Any invariant structure of human life-cycles must account for the shift from an animal to a spiritual control mediator that takes place as the individual moves from childhood's concerns with particular goods, adult interests in finding a place in the world, and finally the kind of reflective intelligence that considers the importance of liberty and free associations in setting sound terminal value. Here we seek a theory of what it means to become truly human, a theory grounded in the world process of emergent probability and extended over the full range of the invariant structure of the human good.

Such a theory of human development would help established practitioners in assessing candidates, both for establishing the potential of each individual for such work and how such a potential may be actualized. Success in this endeavor depends on the life-cycle theory used to carry out such an evaluation. The one presented here covers the full range of human development from the moment of conception to the faith-affirmed reality of a post-death resurrection. For any such theory must take into account fundamental Christian beliefs such as the hypostatic union, the resurrection of the body, the role of the Spirit in the formation of each individual, and the Day of Judgment. At the core of all this lies the critical importance of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion, including the potential for a vertical leap in freedom to a higher perspective. This will play a great part when it comes to understanding the recurring schemes of operation associated with a "Cosmopolis Institute" – the subject of Volume 3.

The *Schematic* can also be used to explore two more areas of special interest: a general evaluative history that takes into account progress, decline, and reversal (the collective counter-part to a theory of human life-cycles); and the role of politics in the exercise of reflective intelligence where terminal values meets the allocation and distribution of power, authority, and influence (a subset of a general theory of history).

This same world process of emergent probability is also used to sketch out a general theory of history involving three distinct levels of intelligibility with the lower ones conditioning the emergence of recurring schemes of operations in the higher, and the higher sublating the recurring schemes of the lower. Our primary focus is on fundamental institutional changes taking place at the global level, for any action taken at regional or local levels will be affected by what is happening across the board. Conditioning this institutional level of intelligibility are recurring schemes of operations at the physical level of the planet where patterns of energy and material use affects what can and can't be accomplished at the institutional level (institutions sublating such energy/material cycles). Sublating this same institutional

level is the transcendental level of the Divine, where the drive for perfection is manifested as the need for intellectual, moral, and religious conversion. Intellectual conversion requires a shift from an epistemology of naïve realism to that of Lonergan's critical realism; moral conversion is a radical shift to value that transcends individual well-being; and religious conversion is not to one formal religion but involves falling in love with something greater than oneself, something or someone who transcends the limitations of human existence.

Finally, we end with a series of reflections on the nature of politics as "fencing with a naked blade" (playing for high stakes). The idea is that politics is a deadly game of power fought over conflicting positions and counter-positions between the two fundamental generative principles of good and evil taking place on the third level of the human good, i.e., terminal value. It is a notion of politics that transcends the more restricted ideas of democracies, republics, dictatorships, communist regimes, high courts, and traditional static cultures to include shifting stands on terminal value being played out in educational, entertainment, financial, or any other institutional context. Anytime terminal value becomes an issue, politics is involved.

These latter two areas are little more than sketches laying out possibilities rather than actualities, though we assert that they are positions capable of being developed and not counter-positions that can only lead to their own destruction.

This concludes our initial inquiry into a common technical language for professional practice involving Lonergan's notion of a cosmopolis. The idea of a specialized institute concerned with establishing a method of controlling meaning through method and persuasion rather than the exercise of power and authority is fleshed out in Volume 3. There we consider the question of how to make Lonergan's notion of a cosmopolis a reality, specifically the form and function of a Cosmopolis Institute writ large as a mission statement, a handbook for practitioners, and a declaration setting down the professional nature of such work.

But all that is still to come. For now, curiously enough, the underlying question is quite simple: How *are* we to relate to each other? At a time when a small group of radicals dedicated to overthrowing Western society have not only encountered little intellectual resistance to their drive for power but—as the general acceptance of socialism among American youth suggests—managed to build a sizable following to their collectivist post-modern mentality, we need a common appreciative system, a common ideology, capable of countering this slide toward chaos and destruction of the good that has been achieved in Western society over thousands of years.

But the intellectual world is too fragmented, and its practitioners too scared, for them to take on the task of clearly and distinctly differentiating between insights and oversights, between progress and decline. This is the challenge offered by Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J., in *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (1957). It is one that we take up in this volume on establishing a common language to do just that.

Finally, it is important to keep in mind that there's a difference between being accurate and moving in the right direction. What follows may or may not be accurate, but at this stage accuracy is less important than determining whether or not we are moving in the right direction. If we are moving in the right direction, accuracy will follow; but if we are not, then all the accuracy in the world will not make it right.

