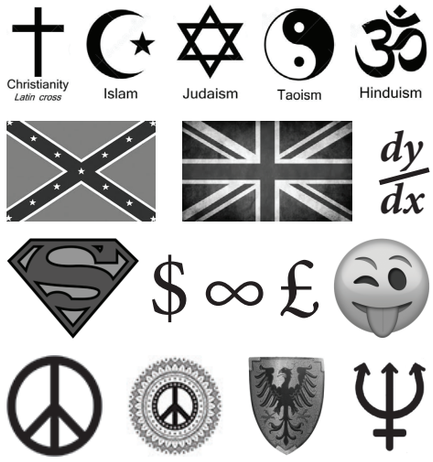
Cosmopolis Meeting October 31st, 2018

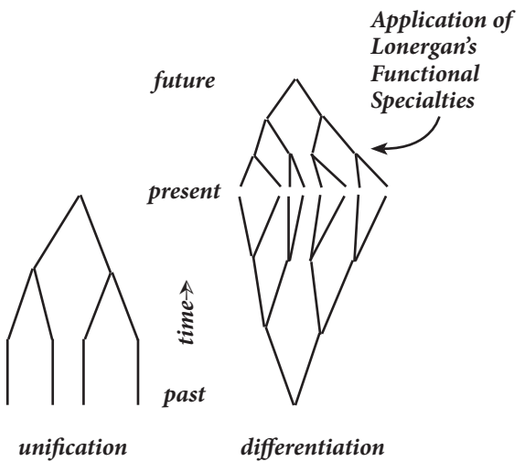
Foundations +++: Sublation: Where We Want to Go

Insight: Elements*: Symbolism deals with the importance of having an apt symbol for the work to be done, e.g., Gottfried Leibniz's dy/dx notation of differential calculus is far superior to Isaac Newton's rather unwieldy dot system for the simple reason that the Leibniz's symbols reflect the actual task at hand, i.e., the change in y as x changes (dy/dx). While Lonergan restricts himself to mathematics, the idea of an image being necessary for any insight defining an idea can be extended into broad symbols that reflect a person's, group's, or civilization's foundational stance. In this sense, such a symbol is a "x" to be known, whose parameters are set down by the image itself but given meaning by the foundational stance of the individual who seeks to know the reality referred to by the symbol. The latter is especially important, since explains how symbols are redefined over time as foundations change, sometime for the better, sometime for the worse. In this way, originally powerful images may be degraded as subsequent generations fail to achieve the level of understanding associated with the founders. This is why we, in our little group, confine ourselves to Lonergan's seminal texts (***Insight *and* Method***) rather than to the many commentators whose foundational stance may be inadequate to reach up to Lonergan's mind.*

World views are to the realm of common sense what theories are to the realm of the empirical sciences: abstract constructions derived from experience. There are three primary differences. First, scientific theories relate things to other things, i.e., electrical charges to magnetic fields or energy equivalents to matter, while common sense relates bodies (perceivable objects) to human interests, i.e., a good meal to hunger or the universe to human progress and/or decline. Second, empirical theories are abstract "eternal" constructs independent of time and space while world views are sensate worlds mediated by meaning and as such are conditioned by human experiences typical of our species. Third, both scientific theories and world views are constrained (control mediated), the former by the elaborate procedures of empirical research and the latter by the authenticity of the foundations of the subject. Both are artificial, in the sense that they are man-made. Both are not allowed to expand without limits, e.g., scientific theories not collaborated by empirical evidence are placed in the dust-bin of history, and world views that exceed reality devolve into myth and magic—and a similar slide into history as the world collapses around them. As for the subject, ***it involves the insight that one's opinions and positions on any topic are not grounded in a world "out there to be seen" but in the state of the person's foundational stance.*** Of the latter, the love of God transcends all (St. Francis, etc.).

Symbols. If the human species has one overriding skill, it lies in our ability to create and manipulate symbols. In fact, we do not live in the real sensate world but in a sensate world mediated through and by meaning. For example, a common piece of paper may no longer be a simple piece of paper but a ten dollar bill that gains its meaning within an economic system of exchange. In that sense, the bill symbolizes a wide range of operations essential to any monetary system. But there are special symbols, images that resemble the images so necessary in the encapsulating of an insight into a formal definition that by their very existence combine concepts, relationships, and operations within a systematic whole. Foundational images are especially important, for not only do they serve as a time-and-space-specific anchor to something that in many ways transcends human finality but they provide an "x" whose properties are to be worked out. Since they are foundational in nature, they reflect the three elements of any foundation: conversion (intellectual, moral, religious), differentiation of mind (common sense, theoretical, interiority, transcendent, etc.), and patterns of common sense experience (biological, aesthetic, intellectual, and dramatic). Note that fundamental institutional change is often a function of changing foundational stances while politics is often fought over fundamental differences (dialectic) in a person or group's foundations.





hard sciences vs philosophy/theology

There's a fundamental difference between the development of the hard sciences and the development of philosophy and theology: the former leads toward a theoretical unity while the latter separate into different schools. The difference is that the empirical method of the sciences provides a means of cumulative and progressive development that discards theories that do not meet the observable facts on the ground while theology and philosophy separate according to foundational differences that more often than not contain fundamental conflicts in their perspective on the world. **Lonergan's transcendental method provides a similar empirical method for theology**, but one not grounded in science but in the cognitional operations of the human mind. These are his functional specialties for bringing cumulative and progressive development for theology, starting with recovering the past (research, interpretation, history, dialectics) and setting the foundations for creating the future (foundations, doctrines, systematics, communications). This is why mutual self-mediation aids in the formation of free individuals who work together to determine what is of terminal value. **And the ultimate terminal value is the Divine Mystery**. Without this at the forefront, man remains mired in a world of relative ethics and compromised morality with no possible appeal to anything that could transcend mere human interests.

1. ***Certain experiences can become symbols.*** Traumatic events can stand for so much more, as is the case of people who have had bad experiences with their father: God as "father" becomes an irreconcilable image. A person's first memory, recalled and modified over time, takes on a symbolic quality grounding a person's life. Or the importance of a mystical or religious experience in transforming a person's life; that event becomes an anchoring point, a reference point, for all that follows.
2. ***Questions that seize.*** As human beings, we have many questions. Most of these have to do with the practical aspects of human living, e.g., how to successfully perform an institutional roles, how to make dinner, how to relate to a "significant other"; the list goes on and on. But then there are those questions that seize a person, that occupy their conscious lives, that leads them to set aside other concerns in order to pursue a certain train of thought or being, e.g., scientists living out their lives in closed labs. Foundational questions.
3. ***The greatest foundational change.*** Most likely the single greatest transformational change in a person's life happens when he or she falls in love. Suddenly, the whole world becomes a different place. The greatest love of all is the love of the Divine Mystery that can permeate a person's life above all else, for the love felt toward God is itself God's love for us. In any case, the result is a radically transformed world mediated by meaning that shifts away from human needs for survival (avoiding death), well-being (avoiding loss), and overcoming limits placed by the would around us (control). If you wish to understanding the meaning of foundations, seek no further than your own experiences of falling in love.
4. ***Truth varies according to the realm of meaning involved.*** By truth, we usually mean statements that hold true for all time and space, statements that transcend any human interest. But it is important to remember that what we consider "true" is a judgment, and our judgment—as might as we wish it not so—is always conditional. One of the greatest conditions are those set by the person's foundational stance (conversion, differentiation, patterns). Differentiation of mind is especially important, for what is considered true depends on the methods pertaining to each realm of meaning. Scientific truths are not the same as common sense truths: the former are expressed in terms of equations while the latter in proverbs or maxims, e.g., a bird in the hand is worth more than two in the bush. Scientific truths must eventually find their ground in the sensate world, while mathematical truths require only consistency.
5. ***Common sense bias***. The long term fragmentation of a civilization finds its grounds in the foundational stance of men and women of common sense intelligence. When long term theological or philosophical concerns are set aside as being irrelevant to the matter at hand, the resulting plans and policies built are built around unobjectified foundations, each stance time-and-space-specific, and each engaged in a dialect of foundational conflicts. Eventually, common action becomes impossible as opposing interests clash with no way of resolving much less understanding the root causes of their problems, and the good of order collapses to brute animal existence.