

COSMOPOLIS MEETING OCTOBER 10TH, 2018 Specialties & match with Framework

In which specialty does this project lie? What is the relationship between Otto's Framework for Professional Practice and Lonergan's Functional Specialties?

FRAMEWORK FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Professional practitioners (in Lonergan's Cosmopolis) are only called in when the situation has become critical and extreme downgrading or collapse looms in the near future. Hence the work is not that of pure theory, of theology or philosophy per se, but the application of what is known as a possible corrective to a volatile and increasingly dysfunctional situation that is quite time-and-space-specific. Finding that remedial course of action takes time and effort, a task that is complicated by the presence of unknown blind spots that plague our thinking on socio-political matters. We know what we know; we know what we don't know; but we don't know what it is that we don't know.

STEP 1: ORIENTATION

There are two components to this. The first is that as a practicing profession one needs to have objectified one's own orientation with respect to the transcendental precepts; this is accomplished at the third reflective level of the human good. The second is that one needs to be able to identify the key features of the orientations of the major stakeholders and participants in the dysfunctional situation. Blind spots in one's own thinking only spread the dis-ease; blind spots and biases in the collective Utopian or ideological approaches provide important clues to underlying pathologies.

Step 2: Evaluation

The way in which any time-and-space-specific socio-political situation is evaluated is a function of the individual or groups appreciative system, i.e., its orientation. Because of a general naive realism permeating the world of common sense, the recognition of what works and what does not seems to be "out there to be seen." But in fact, what constitutes a problem situation is one's internal conditions that is then projected outward into "reality." What actually constitute dysfunctional symptoms, when different individuals and groups evaluate the situation in different if not contrary ways?

STEP 3: DIAGNOSIS

Finally identifying the real symptoms is not the end

of the process. There always in the question of the root cause or causes that lie behind the overt symptoms of decline. This requires a specialized expertise at a transcendental level, for while the work itself is transdisciplinary the only reason it can be carried out at all is by moving to a higher perspective that puts all in a proper intelligible context. The point is, unless the real root causes are brought to light people will either attack symptoms—often to no avail—or attack the wrong causes. In both cases, opportunity costs are incurred and resources wasted in ineffectual attempts to deal with the declining situation. In the meantime, the situation only grows more dire.

STEP 4: PROGNOSIS

How could it grow worse? This stage belongs in some ways to the prior stage of diagnosis, for any analysis of root causes exposes the likely course of events if no remedial action is taken. But it is useful to highlight it as a separate stage for the simple reason that "being about to be hanged" is a great motivator. Also at play are different scenarios should steps be taken to correct the underlying pathologies, so all is not negative. Still, it might be the case that nothing can be done and events will have to play out as they will.

STEP 5: SCOPE & CONSTRAINTS

Now that the root causes have been established and possible remedial courses of action suggested, the time comes to see what can or can't be accomplished in carrying out the suggest remedial strategies. The fact of the matter is that human societies are only partly rational: human emotions, aesthetics, biological realities, and dramatic narratives all combine to aid or hinder what the prior analysis states should be done. This is the realm of common sense intelligence, where an intelligent common sense person knows how to get things done in their own time-and-space-specific socio-political realities. But this requires an understanding of the players, of their respective aptitudes and influence, of cultural limits ("we are not that kind of people"), of biases and special interests, of organized groups, of creative and destruction personalities, of the founding meta-narratives that provide the collective appreciative system for getting things done, etc.

FUNCTIONAL SPECIALTIES

We are not concerned with the first four specialties (research, interpretation, history, dialectics), for they have to do with recovering the past. This doesn't mean that they are not relevant, for they set criteria for the practitioner to come to understand the immediate socio-political situation. Because one's foundational stance is critical to all subsequent work, we pick up the specialties at the pivot point between dialectics and foundations, objectifying foundations before moving on to doctrines, systematics, and finally communications.

5TH SPECIALTY: FOUNDATIONS

Who are you? How reliable are you when it comes to meeting the transcendental precepts? There are two main components in any such intentionality analysis and its resulting horizon: the state of the person's intellectual, moral, and religious conversion; and the extent to which they have a differentiated mind that can clearly and distinctly identify different realms of meaning and the proper forms of inquiry associated with each realm. Or is the person's capacity for liberty and freedom restricted in one or more ways? This step is essential for anyone considering professional practice within a cosmopolis context.

6TH SPECIALTY: DOCTRINES

Doctrines deal with fundamental judgments of reality and hence consist of world views in all their complexity (Nash). Being able to correctly identify different world views and the variety of such views people have adopted over the past, is essential for Step 1: Orientation tasks. It presupposes that one's own orientation is sound, that one's own capacity for discernment is reliable.

7TH SPECIALTY: SYSTEMATICS

While doctrines enhance the practitioner's understanding of orientation, systematics is essential for carrying out any diagnostic endeavor. Like professional medical staff, a sound body of knowledge is required before any attempt can be made to heal an individual's health. The same goes for understanding the source of both progress and decline (insights and oversights) and the necessary prerequisites for reversing decline (conversion, differentiation of mind).

8TH SPECIALTY: COMMUNICATIONS

Communications deals with the problem of mediating between the culture in which the practitioner exists and the professional standing based on a mediating world given depth and stability through the repeated cycles of all the functional specialties. Unfortunately, implementing such a cycle lies beyond the current capacity of our theological practitioners, so we must make do with what we have. But there are clues, there are reliable insights contained in different disciplines including theology that are relevant to the task at hand.