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### **The Form of Inference**

“The real issue, then, is truth.”<sup>1</sup> In a hundred years or so, that issue, the heart of our luminous darkness, will be freshly focused through the cycling of The Standard Model. Perhaps this is best glimpsed by attending to the related precise divisions of perspectives that is to be the fruit of a century of specialized global dialectic.<sup>2</sup>

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The above was an earlier beginning of this chapter which, as the Preface indicates, now becomes more of an outline, or better perhaps, more of a nudge, and this is to be the case right through to chapter 14. The more I worked on these chapters, the wiser my decision appeared. Some of the “beginnings” were already written, and they remain, giving the impression of an incomplete project, not quite sorted out. Which of course will not be true: there is cunning in the mix, as you shall notice as you move forward and about in the book. “The move forward”, for instance, has many meanings: your move forward today; energy’s cosmic inbreeding. The treatment of such meanings is deliberately scattered - not organized - throughout the book. A matter of circumstances and aesthetic balances. Today happens to be the anniversary of Thomas Aquinas’ death, 2006. A good day for some comments on the form of inference. He is the big cultural discontinuity on the topic and in its luminous practice: he was very consistently in good form of inference. The move into and forward from his luminosity regarding the form of inference: now that would be a good place to start. And Lonergan has left a decent print-start on that in his early searching, “the Form of Inference” .

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<sup>1</sup>*Insight*, 549[572].

<sup>2</sup>Clearly, I was aiming far too high here. Practically you are invited to face the slow honest self-digestion of “The Form of Inference”. But it is of consequence to “bear in mind” the fullest context is that “provided” by the four final sections of chapter 14 below, but a more proximate help is note 2 of the next chapter. The key issue for Lonergan students is taking a stand, an operating stand, on the demands of that troublesome page 250 of *Method in Theology*. But the serious “bearing” and “provision” is the next century’s task.

The direction of development of this chapter suggested by the first few lines was one that would have swung into the dialectic separation of position and counterpositions suggested by that nice “line-up” Lonergan gives in the Introduction to *Insight*,<sup>3</sup> which would have Extreme Realism at the top ( I am turning the line **up!**), idealism in the middle, empiricism at the bottom. Scholastically-educated people will notice a parallel with the downward listing of esse, form and matter.<sup>4</sup> Where would I put scholasticism in the listing? Perhaps hanging in there in a muddled half-way hut between empiricism and idealism.<sup>5</sup> And what of Lonergan disciples? I would suggest that not too many of them are extreme realists in the sense that I point towards in chapter 9, the chapter relating to dialectic.<sup>6</sup> Yesterday I was somewhat surprised to read one serious Lonergan student on the topic of intellectual conversion, one of the few who has the written at some length on it, and found elementary muddles. Who was it, says you? But it is up to each of us to detect our own muddles, with perhaps a little help from our friends.<sup>7</sup>

I think that the big difficulty for those interested in Lonergan’s achievement is the lack of experience of serious theoretic pushing. There is a sense in which that was the whole purpose of the discomforting exercises in the first chapter here.<sup>8</sup> Penrose asks for thirty pages of effort to get

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<sup>3</sup>*Insight*, xxviii[ 25].

<sup>4</sup>A context here is *Cantower XXIX*.

<sup>5</sup>Where to put all the ladies and gentlemen of logic and phenomenology is another and complex matter, eventually to be handled by the internal combustion of page 250 of *Method*. See the comments on is-ing in *Phenomenology and Logic*: leads are in the index under such words as *Truth, Is it?, Existence*.

<sup>6</sup>I return to the existentialism of the problem in section 8 of chapter 14.

<sup>7</sup>In the later culture of The Standard Model, there is to be the companionship of those who are working round the Oval: the relevant diagram is included at the end of chapter 7.

<sup>8</sup>I realize that the exercise of the first chapter is beyond the educational background of the present generation, so I offer you other entry-zones. There are the simple exercises of chapter 3 of *Wealth of Self*. There is the exercise of grappling with that challenge of the first page of *Insight*, Archimedes’ discovery, which I dealt with at length in *Cantower XXVII*. And, for those who have no taste for science, I suggest an exercise that I have found magnificently educational over the years. “How many ways can n married couples be seated about a round table in such a

to grips with the form of Turing machines: don't you think that thirty pages on the form of inference would be an altogether more difficult venture? Honestly? I suspect that my claim shocks you. So much for Lonergan's claim to me, in 1971, that he sorted is?! - the form of inference - out when he got that far in *Insight*.

In a later conversation of the 1970s he talked about his earlier climb, and in particular of his effort in "The Form of Inference," which, he "pulled out of my files" when the editor of *Thought* asked him for something.<sup>9</sup> I would say that that early effort is a good place to start, especially if you are armed with a copy of Euclid and ready to face the tricky work of identifying the activity that pulls axioms, premises, whatever, to a unity that brings your form of inference into light and delight, into itself, in a manner that leads you to find what Aristotle edged towards finding, to find the puzzles of activity and passivity, to find the strange grounded self-reference that lurks over all Goedel-like claims:  $(x). \text{Dem } (x, y)$ , where  $x$  can be a massively complex aggregate or set and  $y$  is what you wish to take a stand on: quite beyond Aristotle.. And I would add that there is a great deal of pleasant exercising of the form of your inference - what form your inferential self is in - to be had from the guidelines of chapter 8 below: which *entree* I am going to have?

Indeed - and this is curiously the case with all these chapters 2-13, but with a different attention-structure in each - you might well go back for a re-read of chapter 1 and catch your own form in its sentence by sentence is-ing. This might well have lead me here to another version of a lengthy chapter. My hope is that such lengthy chapters will emerge in later generations, helping beginners to rejoice in that pinnacle of themselves that is knowing<sup>10</sup> the truth which makes them

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manner that there is always one man between two women and none of the men is ever next to his own wife?" (The problem, invented by Edouard Lucas at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, is quite a challenge: discovering this is an education in serious explanatory thinking. You will find leads in my article of volume 1 of the Website *Journal of Macrodynamical Analysis*.) The problem, of course, belongs to the age of pre-gay couples.

<sup>9</sup>See the good contextualization by F. Crowe, *Collection*, 256-7.

<sup>10</sup>Notice that in this sentence one is being nudged to more complex instances of inference, one of the most evident of which is the inference that grounds taking directions from someone. Again, I note the need for subtle self-attentive exercises: exercise your way through the dynamics

free.<sup>11</sup>

All this is beginning stuff that seems to me to have been missed by many who “read” Lonergan. Back to that first paragraph above, to which I add two further pointers. First, notice where the comment occurs in the book *Insight*. The position towards which *Insight* invites you is a luminous stand in mystery in opposition to the mythic consciousness that dominates academic activity as it emerged in the axial period. Secondly, I would ask you to take that issue back to three spots in the book: the statement of the position;<sup>12</sup> statements about the existential subject;<sup>13</sup> the statement about the “come about”<sup>14</sup> that is the operative ethos of one who finds himself or herself growing luminous (about)<sup>3</sup> that strange form of their own neurochemistry.

That last sentence should give you pause, a balance in prayerful discernment of whether you’ve “got the whole thing right in your intellectual paws.”<sup>15</sup>

Getting the whole thing in your paws and bones requires digesting to the level of present Tower achievement the seven Words of Metaphysics or “metagrams”. For the beginner these are like the periodic table for a beginner in chemistry: pointers towards an accepted complexity of

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of bright-eyed knowing that “the source uttered the proposition, uttered it as true, uttered it truthfully, and was not mistaken.”(*Insight*, 710[732]). The tone of your inference is different in each of the four cases. Which do you find trickiest?

<sup>11</sup>One can push the question “what is the form of my inference?” right through the book *Insight*, rising to appreciate the rising layers of that form, right up to the dynamics of its supernatural lift. You might say that, in so far as you are in the concrete reality of a religious openness, your form of inference is the form that goes with the exigence mentioned in **PL** (See the index there under *Exigence*). Look back now to the exercise suggested in the previous note. In the present case there is the oddity of an identity between Source and Proposition. See Lonergan’s “Analysis of Faith” published in various places, a very difficult challenge of self-digestion.

<sup>12</sup>*Insight* 388[413].

<sup>13</sup>I would note especially two spots in *Insight*: your bewildered and threatened self (385[410]), your shattered lonely self (625[848]).

<sup>14</sup>See the quotation in the frontispiece, “so it comes about....”

<sup>15</sup>Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 356.

### The Standard Model.

Two of these Words are immediately relevant and so I add them here. Wo is different from the other metagrams in that it is not a seriously structured image but a set of four “proposals” that I used from the beginning of my teaching of philosophy, against the background of the little book *Wealth of Self and Wealth of Nations. Self-Axis of the Great Ascent* (available on my website, free). They are not easy to digest and indeed, although they are the centre of a first year course in philosophy, some, like Augustine, need a decade to get there. We will do some more about the difficulties later, but I note two points of labour with students: the Inside-Out business that is dealt with in chapter 6 of that book; add to that the labour of getting students to tune into what they do when they nod.

W4k is also a metagram I have used from the start.<sup>16</sup> The version below is taken from Appendix A of *Phenomenology and Logic*. Obviously it relates to [3] in Wo. But how does it relate to *Insight*, or to those famous three questions in *Method in Theology*? That is a massively difficult existential problem that I must leave you with at this stage.

### Wo

- [1] S.I. (Sensitive integration) = P (Perceptual experience)
- [2] P: not like Reality ( R )
- [3] Knowledge = Correct Understanding of Experience (CUE)
- [4] CUE -----> R

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<sup>16</sup>See the version of it on *Wealth*, p. 15. Its source is the six lectures that Lonergan gave in Dublin during Easter in 1961. The first lecture was not taped, but the other five are available in the Toronto Lonergan Centre.

