
The Dialectic of Psychic Orientations

Here I resolve to cut back radically from anything like a serious consideration of the psyche and its dynamics: it is a very big unwritten book, massively integrating neurodynamics.¹ In 1969, working on both musicology and botany towards papers for the Florida Conference, philotherapy was central to my considerations, living and talk “which in treating of method, may touch the marrow of the bone.”²

I am here, you must recall, on page 250 of *Method in Theology*, and so in the context of what I expressed already in my lengthy musings on that page.³ What I jot here are brief helpful pointers, complementing those of chapter 9 and 12, regarding Doran’s large book, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*.

Page 250 is a program, but its illustrations are just convenient, fragmentary. Relevant to sorting out Doran’s perspective is noting what intellectual conversion is in its fullness. Certainly the heart of it is the stand to which one is invited, a stand on the real, but it climbs forward from that - with the various mediations of harmony and genuineness pointed to in chapter 15 of *Insight*

¹I must point forward to note 5 of chapter 13, and to the distant project of getting the thinking organism that is oneself into the massively strange and estranging psychic state of an explanatory mediation of living. The estrangement, of course, is to be minimized by the emergence, in the third stage of meaning, of Tower companions, protopossessive of, and possessed by, the poosition. *Cantower IX*, “Position, Poosition, Protopossession” is a context, but represents only my initial searching of in this zone.

²I quote from the paper on botany, “Image and Emergence. Towards and Adequate *Weltanschauung*”, at footnote 147. That footnote is in fact to the word bone, and it includes the remark “I think here of the application within philosophic discourse of such a work as R. Corlis and P. Rabe, *Psychotherapy from the Centre*, Pennsylvania, 1969.”

³I refer especially to two series of reflection: the 8 SOFDAWARE, the Quodlibet series.

- to the existential stand that I referred to in my double frontispiece.⁴

The key psychic orientation relevant here is the orientation towards serious understanding, a reach toward an embrace⁵ of the universe that also embraces “a symbolic indication of the total range of possible experience.”⁶ This orientation is not attended to in Doran’s work. His view of “explanation” does not reach out towards that key “come about” which to me is the orientation of The Standard Model. Here, obviously, detail cannot be replaced by anecdote, yet one can ask what does Doran mean by *dream*? Is his meaning luminously open to the demands of the first word of metaphysics, which brings the discussion of dreams into the world of energy, of physics, of chemodynamics?⁷ What does he mean by Freud’s censor? Certainly he can agree with Lonergan, but only in an essentially deficient manner.⁸ “The censor is neither an agent nor an activity but simply a law or rule of interrelations between successive levels of integration; the constructive censorship is an admission into consciousness of elements that enter into the higher integration; the repressive censorship is the exclusion from consciousness of elements that the higher integration cannot assimilate; the analyst that attempts a retrospective education of his patient is engaged in enlarging potentialities for integration, and the resistance offered by the patient is a byproduct of the higher integration putting its own twist

⁴The double frontispiece obviously refers to the balance of inner and outer words.

⁵I can only point you here to a favorite text on *Insight* 417[442] where, literally, is the heart of the book, giving intimate meaning to the drive towards serious understanding in any area. “Theoretical understanding seeks to solve problems, to erect synthesis, to embrace the universe in a single view.” Thus, the universe “can bring forth its own unity in the concentrated form of a single intelligent view” (*Ibid.*, 520[544]). So, for example, botany becomes a cosmic love-life. “Little flower - but if I could understand / What you are, root and all, and all in all, / I should know what God and man is” (I am recalling the poem of Tennyson to which Lonergan refers: see *For a New Political Economy*, 31).

⁶*Insight*, 396[421].

⁷It is useful here to add the context of the beginning of chapter 13.

⁸See the following note. *Essential* points to a missing of essence.

on what it can assimilate and circumventing what it cannot.”⁹

A little later in that chapter - which is simply a pointer towards the beginning of adequate metaphysical control - Lonergan points to the need for an underpinning of organic explanation, “study of the organism begins ...”¹⁰: I do not find this heuristic control dominant in Doran’s work. Further, a serious existential musing about the censorship as summarily touched on by Lonergan is relevant, and so I have quoted it fully. Is psychic conversion, as sketched by Doran, a vital element in the dynamic of human progress? It was a question I posed to Doran - I used, as I recall people like Beethoven and Cezanne as illustration - during our collaboration on the volume *Searching for Cultural Foundations*. The constructive and repressive censor may well balance out the dynamics of a particular foundational person so that the resistance of that person’s neurodynamics is indeed “a byproduct of the higher integration” of, that is, not just the subject, but the subjects horizon-stretching towards the field.¹¹

The difficulties and problems that I am pointing to in Doran go back to a limited view of intellectual conversion. This in turn relates to a problem of reading the book *Insight* which I dealt with more than forty years ago.¹² It is worth airing here, since Doran is not alone in missing the point.

The point can be reached by adverting seriously to the fact that *being* is used in a peculiar

⁹*Insight*, 457 [482]. I would note that this section 6 of chapter 15 is peculiar in that it is a powerful general heuristic that leans on the developments to be achieved by the operations of inquiry specified in the next section. Doran’s treatment of the psyche does not reach into those developments, which full intellectual conversion calls us to. There is a large problem here regarding the insufficiency of descriptive sophistication. Aristotlean aggregism, as well the relentless pushing of reductionism, demands that we capture the lower aggregates in the embrace of explanation. The key page in *Insight* is the one referred to in the next note.

¹⁰*Insight*, 464[489].

¹¹It is important to push for a sense of Lonergan’s reach in *Phenomenology and Logic* when he uses the word *field* (borrowed from an existentialist source, but I have lost the reference). Useful here is *Lack in the Beingstalk*, chapter 3, “*Haute Vulgarization*”, which reaches for that sense through imagings of flowers and gardens.

¹²“The Contemporary Thomism of Bernard Lonergan”, *Philosophical Studies*, (Maynooth, Ireland), 1962.

way in chapter 12 of *Insight*. In 1962 I suggested that it might have been more helpful had Lonergan used some silly word like *oompa*. One is not confronted with the existential problem of intellectual conversion until - in the old *Insight* the turn-about come-about of the reader was the psychic turn given by the turn of the page 388 - one read the challenge,

“It will be a basic position,

(1) if the real is the concrete universe of being and not a subdivision of the ‘already out there now’;

(2) if the subject becomes known when it affirms itself intelligently and reasonably and so in not known yet in a prior ‘existential’ state; and

(3) if objectivity is conceived as a consequence of intelligent inquiry and critical reflection, and not as a property of vital anticipation, extroversion or satisfaction.”¹³

Taking that stand is the essential seed, a beginning to intellectual conversion that should climb, through adult growth from Position to Position to Protopossession, to the heuristic symbolization of the “come about” that establishes the foundational enlightenment central to The Standard Model, that is highlighted by my double frontispiece to this book. There, as I recalled at the conclusion of chapter 9, the hearty core of the Standard Model is expressed in the brutal ice of Lonergan’s fantasy-words regarding symbols of comprehension and strangeness of come-about.

Doran, on the other hand, focuses, in his discussion of intellectual conversion, on “the pivotal eleventh chapter of *Insight*.”¹⁴ A later paragraph notes that “Intellectual conversion,

¹³Insight 388[413]. I would note a disappointing editorial change in the recent edition. The symbolism of the turn of the page obviously could not easily be retained. But cramming the entire positional stand into a continuous paragraph was shoddy. The above lay-out is the original, even including the peculiar gap after “it will be a position.” I doubt if later editions will restore the author’s intended spacing. What if an editor did the same to Amadeus’s pacings?

¹⁴*Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 20.

which Lonergan usually discusses first, is in its explicit philosophic form rooted in the self-affirmation of the knower that we discussed in the first part of this chapter” and he concludes that paragraph by remarking that “there follows a series of developments,”¹⁵ but those development are not present, either thematically or operationally, in the rest of the book.

Finally I should add that I do not think psychic conversion was something new to Lonergan, no more that I would claim that theoretic conversion was something I added to Lonergan’s view. These, indeed, were Lonergan’s views of Doran’s focus on the psyche and on the shift to theory. He remarked to me when talking of Doran’s work in the 1970s, “its nice to see it spelled out.” The spelling out of theoretic differentiation was something that we just did not discuss: it was too much a taken- for-granted element in the entire project, the cultural shift of his life. What I think now important to spell out is energy’s finality towards the Cosmic Word that can suffer twists and turns of the psyche, energy and grace “putting its own twists”¹⁶ on what is eventually to be transfigured into a networking with *felix culpa*.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁶See the conclusion of the quotation from *Insight* at note 9 above.