

A FRESH PEDAGOGICAL BEGINNING ON THE MEANING OF INTERPRETATION

I have been leading towards this beginning in the previous two essays here. The focus of that beginning is to be on the third section of chapter 17 of *Insight*, on pages 585–617 of the new edition. When we finish we may go further, to the fuller context of the 8-fold cyclic process that transposes, enriches, and makes effective the pointings given in this part of *Insight*. The *we* in the previous sentence is not the royal *we* of authors but, hopefully, the *we* of those interested in this fresh start.

As in the previous two essays, I feel pressed to be brief. Just now I returned to the first essay in this series, “The Disputed Location of Disputing Quests,” to which there is an appendix that is a report to the usual Lonergan gathering at the end of the Boston College Lonergan Workshop 2016. You might peruse the essay and the appendix, but there is a sense in which it is best to leave it aside and resolve to join me in this new elementary adventure. I am now much clearer on the sad fact that that the canons of hermeneutics really have little or no meaning for the present generations of Lonergan students. The story of that failure could be written up, as the text of Robinson and Eatwell write up the story of the present failed economics.¹ But it seems best to advise you to take an optimistic turn. What I am at parallels their conclusion of their story-telling: “It is time to go back to the beginning and start again.”²

Indeed, there is an optimistic sense in which we are back at the beginning of *Insight*, yet poised to go another way that fits in with its first sentence. “In the midst of that vast and profound stirring of human minds which we name Lonerganism, McShane was convinced that too many people felt it beneath them to direct their efforts to apparently trifling problems.” Our trifling problems connect with the apparently simple project of telling someone about something. Lonergan starts in on the same problem 600 pages out in his massive venture of

¹ Joan Robinson and John Eatwell, *An Introduction to Modern Economics*, McGraw Hill, London and New York, 1973.

² *Ibid.*, 52.

Insight with the statement, “The problem of interpretation can best be introduced by distinguishing between expression, simple interpretation, and reflective interpretation.”³ His musings on reflective interpretation five paragraphs later is for me one of the great jokes of *Insight*: read it freshly and LOL. And then perhaps write to me in that laughter and in the good humor suggested in the later section of *Insight* on “Possible Functions of Satire and Humor.”⁴ Still, he places in the middle of that lighter light the issue of darkened potency with which we now wish to deal, sixty years later. Lonerganism is an “indeterminate directed dynamism”⁵ that is way off track, failing to end properly the reading of the first page of *Method in Theology*, failing to turn to page 4 with an operatic song in their start.

Might you join me, in your “solitude of loneliness, in the shattering upheavals of personal or social disaster”⁶ that is present Lonergan studies?

I shall begin anew in this summer with a simple pedagogy of the problem of interpretation, in a new series titled, obviously, *Interpretation*, appearing on the website from August on. I would hope by then not to be climbing the foothills in a “solitude of loneliness.”

³ *Insight*, 585.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 647–9.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 648.

⁶ *Ibid.*