

## Fusion 11

### Interpretation: *Method 7* lifted into Canons and Collaboration I.

This is the essay mentioned in note 3 of Fusion 5, but freshly written and broken into Parts. No need to go back to see what was involved by that note: enough to know that this essay was the first *Fusion 5*, half-written but then postponed due to the need for a larger context of collaboration. *Fusion 1* and *Fusion 5* give that context: two essays that I call, respectively, my *swansong* and my *soupsong*.<sup>1</sup> The other essays in the series up to now have been related to collaboration in meeting the challenge of economic reform. Now the question comes up - raised again in *Fusion 14*, in another context<sup>2</sup> - of collaboration in the challenge expressed in the present title. At present I am more optimistic about the topic: different people have expressed interest in struggling forward together, specifically in getting light on the footnote of *Method in Theology*, 153: "See my discussion of the truth of interpretation in *Insight*, pp. 562-594 [now pp. 585-617], and observe how ideas presented there recur here in quite different functional specialties. For instance, what there is termed a universal viewpoint, here is realized by advocating a distinct functional specialty named dialectic." The optimism leads me to reduce my effort to some helpful hints, pointers both as to tackling the task and also to the further reaches of the communal effort.

I note that I am not going to gather up previous efforts of mine or others on this topic. You might think of my effort here as methodological doctrine. But neither am I going to say anything further for the moment about such doctrine: I am going to plunge into my hints.

First, then, there is a neat bridge from *Method 7* to *Insight's* canons in the

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<sup>1</sup>The swansong is so named because it is a final effort at a compendious statement of my position; the soupsong is so named, with nice French ambiguity, because it is an alphabet soup in twenty six lettered sections of collaborative possibilities.

<sup>2</sup>The context is the unwritten story of fifty years of Lonergan studies.

consideration of the question, What is it to mind a friend? Take mind here to be an exegetical operation: that places you in the heading of section 1 of chapter 7, "Basic Exegetical Operations". I am not going to get into strategies of listening or reading here: you need telling illustrations, illustrations that will tell you what you are getting, what you are missing. Your friend is telling you about being depressed by a parent, or about being enthralled by Mozart. Or whatever helps. The key to the jump to the canons is to notice that your friend has a past and a future. That throws you into the second paragraph of second canon of hermeneutics: there is a "genetic sequence"; "there are dialectic alternatives"; there is "the advance of culture and effective education"; there is "the differentiation and specialization of modes of expression". But, unless you are well advance in self-digestion - and we'll come to that - this is not too strange. You and your friend have shared a past and may share a long future of friendship. But it is worth pausing over this sharing, its commonsense content and perhaps its commonsense limitations. The commonsense content can be dense and rich, weaved round memories of joys and sufferings, leaning into the future of "being in process"<sup>3</sup> .... that may include "the solitude of loneliness, the shattering upheavals of personal and social disaster."<sup>4</sup> That commonsense content can be analogous to "The Setting and the Story"<sup>5</sup> talked of by N.T. Wright, talked of in all the richness of his perspective and read thus by you.

Let us not be distracted here by questions of Wright's horizon. The issue is your horizon. You are Jill to his Jack.<sup>6</sup> Where is the face-book that you are reading? The book hand-helded, like "the hand, is really out there; it is an object. The eye, strangely, is not

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<sup>3</sup>*Insight*, 625[648].

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>The title of chapter 6 of N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1992.

<sup>6</sup>Lonergan, "Cognitional Structure", *Collection*, 215.

in the hand; it is some distance away in the head; it is the subject. The eye really sees the hand"<sup>7</sup> and sees N.T. Wright's book and sees the typescript there .... and .... out here! Might this be true of the spontaneous you, or even of the philosophically-educated you? And does this leave you "somewhat bewildered and dismayed"?<sup>8</sup>

Such bewilderment helps you towards the issue, your horizon: but only if you reach in strenuous fantasy for some grip and self-grip on the resistance that Lonergan types about in the first two paragraphs of section 3.7 of *Insight* chapter 17: the minor resistance to a discomfiting scientific change, the major resistance that was the topic of the previous paragraph. Without that reach of fantasy, a molecular stretching, my effort to help you to self-help - and to the changing of history - will just fizzle and thus let you continue in stale pre-scientific patterns of descriptive interpretations. This has been the case for fifty years of reading this chapter, and these paragraphs of *Insight*: might we break forwards in these next years to at least respect and recognize the brilliance of the pointings that burst from Lonergan's over-heated brain in that late Summer of 1953?

"The real issue, then, is truth,"<sup>9</sup> but my focus here is not on *is* but on *what*, not then on the major resistance but on the minor resistance. Yet obviously the two issues mesh: "modern science has made it possible to distinguish very sharply between preliminary description and scientific explanation,"<sup>10</sup> and that sharpness is a possibility of a very personal lift out of idiot notions of truth. The minor resistance has delayed, for fifty years, for by far the majority of readers, the adequate reading for *Insight*.

Let me first map, in three points, the full climb that goes against the minor resistance. [1] There is the seriousness with which Lonergan talks of making a

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<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup>*Insight*, 581[604].

<sup>9</sup>The first sentence of *Insight*, chapter 17, section 2, "The Notion of Truth".

<sup>10</sup>The last phrase of *Insight* chapter 15.

beginning in metaphysics, which may surprise you by being well out in chapter 15 of the book. "To prepare our statement of the integral heuristic structure that we have named metaphysics, attention must now be directed to genetic method"<sup>11</sup> [2] there is what I have noted as the Lonergan's identification of the "comeabout" psyche: "So it comes about that the extroverted subject visualizing extension and experiencing duration gives place to the subject orientated to the objective of the pure desire to know and affirming beings differentiated by certain conjugate potencies, forms, and acts grounding certain laws and frequencies."<sup>12</sup> [3] there is, finally, the fusion pointed to in the second paragraph of the second canon of hermeneutics, a discovered fusion which involves "the discoverer's grasp of his own discovery", in which, "fused into a single explanation"<sup>13</sup> there is a genetic sequencing of meanings, inclusive both of reversals of observations and of control of expressions.

I have not quoted the paragraph, but rather compacted it into further incomprehensibility. The paragraph to follow in *Insight* begins with the words "to avoid confusion", one of those wonderful daft Lonergan phrases, like the beginning of the last paragraph in chapter 5 of *Insight*, "The answer is easily reached." Confusion is avoided in both these cases only if one has climbed all the brutal way with the author, an impossible task for the generations of twentieth century readers. How are we to fare in the twenty first century? "*The Genesis of Adequate Self-knowledge*" was beyond the twentieth century. In a tincture of optimism I mentioned the date 2111 as locating a period of initial adequacy when I wrote the book *Lonergan's Standard Model of Effective Global Inquiry*. Will there really then be a community at home in the standard model? Perhaps I can temper my optimism and yours by speaking of an acceptance that

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<sup>11</sup>It is the beginning of the final section, section 7, of the chapter.

<sup>12</sup>*Insight* 514[537].

<sup>13</sup>The final words of that paragraph, which were the initial source of my use of the word *fusion*.

paralleled the acceptance in the 1870s of the suggested chemical table of Mendeleev and Meyer?

The three sign-postings are like marks identifying camps on the slopes of Everest. But is this all that I can say in the way of help? In so far as you have rambled round my previous writings you will have found other elements of help, like the help it is to take seriously the challenge of “the apparently trifling problem” of Archimedes on the first page of the book.<sup>14</sup> But I promised not to go back, but to point forward. So, I point forward with some monumental magnificence to “God’s concept,”<sup>15</sup> one of the oddest out-of-place expressions in *Insight*. In God’s concept, the Word, there is “fused into a single explanation” not only history but “an enormous aggregate of similar, possible universes”<sup>16</sup> and, no doubt, finitudes vastly dissimilar. The Word is the Divine Theoretic. The mind of Jesus had and has a word of that Word that is and was shabbily adequate. The Gospel of John delightfully has Jesus enter the Shakespearean stage with the question, “What do you want?”, and with equal significance move towards the end with His statement of what He wants: “that they all may be one; as thou, Father, are in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.”<sup>17</sup> The mind of Jesus is in that prayer still, in a posture of incompleteness, leading us on everlastingly towards the ever-incomplete fusion.

And are we not in that climb of prayer here-now, now-here, **nowhere**? Are we not resting and questing in the real?<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>See the lengthy treatment of that problem in *Cantower 27*. I avoid pointing to writings helpful to the climb I write of here, but it seems worth mentioning that the 5 Cantowers, 27-31, are an effort to reorientate the reading of the first 5 chapters of *Insight*.

<sup>15</sup>*Insight*, 726[748].

<sup>16</sup>*Insight*, chapter 19, section 7.

<sup>17</sup>*John*, 17 : 21.

<sup>18</sup>A context for considering the question is the series of five essays, *Prehumous 4-8*, in which I consider “Foundational Prayer”. In particular, there is the definition there of prayer as

The issue, that same issue of truth and horizon, that we are vortexing round, is *The Genesis of Adequate Self-knowledge.*, of that exigent<sup>19</sup> nature within nature, a genesis “that would bring the virtualities of that nature into the light of day,”<sup>20</sup> a genesis not possible - in our earthy earthly pilgrim state, “without the prior development of the sciences.”<sup>21</sup> That development tunes us into the Theoretic of God, who is explanatory, not descriptive. The people of the Tower of Able, carers for the great pilgrimage, are cosmic-called as pilgrims to that explanation, that Explanation, to be at home in the comeabout camp, and still further at home - the brutal gentle message of the second canon of hermeneutics - in the further sweeping up of description into their inner word.

“Most of all what is lacking is knowledge of all that is lacking, and only gradually is that knowledge acquired.”<sup>22</sup> When is that knowledge to be achieved? I used to use the phrase “the second million years is on our side” but now it seems better to think in terms of the billions of years that the earth has left on its sunlit way. The fact is, however, that knowledge of what is lacking is to be an eschatological achievement: until then it is looking in a glass darkly with growing precision. [to be continued]

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“resting and questing in the real”, which leads to the answer Yes, to the question in the text. Was James Joyce, or the fictional Molly Bloom, resting or questing in the real as the words were penned in *Ulysses*? “Id love to have the whole place swimming in roses God of heaven theres nothing like nature the wild mountains then the sea”; “and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes and to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will yes”. For a paralleling of *John’s Gospel* and *Ulysses*, see my Website book, *Process: Introducing Themselves to Young Christian Minds*, section 2 in both chapter 1 and chapter 5.

<sup>19</sup>See the index to *Phenomenology and Logic*, under index. A fuller context is Lonergan’s essay, *De Ente Suprenaturale*.

<sup>20</sup>*Insight* 535[558].

<sup>21</sup>*Insight* 535[558-9}

<sup>22</sup>*Insight* 536[559].