

## Fusion 18

### Sorting Out The Second Canon of Hermeneutics

This short essay is not that sorting out, a sorting out which is going to required a communal effort of functional collaboration. The essay is very much a doctrinal ramble.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, it is a doctrinal ramble that is given within **my** Standard Model. Why **my**? Sadly, because the effort called for by Lonergan has not been faced as yet. After over fifty years his challenge remains and has been added to by his light-weight but clear challenge of *Method in Theology*. My standard model is certainly shared, at various levels of adult growth, especially by members of **SGEME**. And perhaps it is to them that this doctrinal hints are primarily directed?

But the possession of a standard model in what I call Fusionism - we need to save Lonergan from Lonerganism - as it is possessed in present physics makes me think in terms of 2111 A.D.<sup>2</sup>

Best start on our present topic with the core hint from Lonergan: “if we want to have a comprehensive grasp of everything in a unified whole, we shall have to construct a diagram in which are symbolically represented all the various elements of

<sup>1</sup>A previous doctrinal ramble, Cantower 41, “Functional Policy,” may be a useful context. But I certainly ask my reader, re-reader, to put this essay into the context of the end of section 1 of the chapter on Doctrines in *Method in Theology*, beginning at the top of page 297. I would note that systematic theology is now being conceived quite differently, even prescinding from its place as a single specialty within the larger system that is cyclic collaboration (see the website book, *Method in Theology: Revisions and Implementations*, chapters 1-10). One has to make a creative leap when one is talking about “church authorities and theologians” (298, line 2) in the new context. We return to the Gospel of John in the conclusion, but I suggest some fantasy regarding the conversation at the well in John 4, particularly a re-reading of the repeated phrase “an hour is coming”(John 4: 21, 23). If, in the medieval period, “there was needed some overall systematic view” (297), the need is altogether greater eight centuries later. The return to the Gospel of John in the conclusion? It weaves into one of the commas in the final diagram.

<sup>2</sup>I chose this date when writing *Lonergan’s Standard Model of Effective Global Inquiry*, a Website book, with a recurrent theme of Patrick Kavanagh’s poetry in mind “in a hundred years or so”.

the question along with all the connections between them.”<sup>3</sup> Now let me mention some disturbing but helpful contextualizing hints, from relativity theory, from mathematics, from mathematical logic, in each case turning your eye towards the way of discovery. In relativity theory there is certainly the nudge from the cloud of unknowing that surrounded the Lorentz contraction: but there must also come out of the woods Riemann’s thinking and symbolisms. And in the problem posed by Fermat, and the problem tackled by Goedel, there are similar parallels.

Why do I present these parallels and, gracious me, or ungracious me, present them as a help? It is a matter of a wake-up call for most, and a reminder for the few. Our problem is picked up from late in the book *Insight*, a light-weight doctrinal book which, on the main, dodges the genetic symbolizations that would ground the control of meaning of a genetic ingesting of the growing “comprehensive grasp of everything in a unified whole.”<sup>4</sup> There is, in chapter 5 of *Insight*, no real venture into the tensor calculus that would push us towards an update in our grasp of our herenow, but relevant in the now-here of us is noticing effectively the absence of the tensor calculus of metagrams and metawords, that, like Einstein’s equations writ large,<sup>5</sup> would hold our nerves towards the ice-climb<sup>6</sup> sorting out of the second canon of hermeneutics.

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<sup>3</sup>Loneragan, *On the Ontological and Psychological constitution of Christ*, CWL 7, 151.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* Of course, the full context of our problem is the meaning of an explicit metaphysics, “the conception, affirmation, and implementation of the integral heuristic structure of .... being” (*Insight*, 416). That explicit metaphysics “would consist in a symbolic indication of the total range of possible experience” *Ibid.*, 421. It would include description in a mediated and intellectual fashion (*Ibid.*, 419). It would include, for instance, the descriptive and explanatory genesis of the work of Einstein, Fermat, Goedel and the heuristics of Beethoven, Rembrant, Lloyd Wright. Further, its symbolic indication would include a symbolic indication of the affectively symbolic. It is the enterprise, obviously, of a functional cosmopolis.

<sup>5</sup>I think here of favorite books of mine that thus write large: Schroedinger’s *Space-Time Structure*, or the writings of Eddington. What do you think of?

<sup>6</sup>The large issue of the affectively symbolic, raised in note 4, is refined here as a thematic of what is existential. I think of Yeats’ “aspiration to a form of utterance in which imagination

Take, for instance, the little word *tweezers*, used by Lonergan in talking about the mesh of description and explanation.<sup>7</sup> It is a bit like using *The White House* as pointing to the mesh of people and government in the United States. What is needed is an explanation of that mesh, and that explanation calls for a massive shift of culture, way more of a shift than the modest shift of space time studies between 1900 and 2000, or the modest shift of the symbols of mathematical logic that one can notice between **JSL** (*Journal of Symbolic Logic*) 1900 and **JSL** 2000. I have written briefly of this elsewhere<sup>8</sup> and there is no point in abbreviating that treatment when what is needed is not just an enlargement but a cultural shift such as is represented by, say, gauge theory talk as the communal daylight and delight of particle discourse in physics.

So, broad doctrinal rambling sweeps are in order. There are the metagrams, a random and incomplete list gasping for a future of expression of human loneliness that would complement and expand the reachings of the arts and the technologies.<sup>9</sup>

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would be ‘carried beyond feeling into the aboriginal ice’ ”(Seamus Heaney, *The Redress of Poetry*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1995, 156), but feeling too is thus carried from an existential self-possession. So it is not true of genuine metaphysics, as it is of one bent noted by the poet Larkin, that “all we have to protect us against these metaphysically Arctic conditions is the frail heat-shield generated by human kindness” (ibid. 152).

<sup>7</sup>*Insight*, 316: ”description supplies, as it were, the tweezers by which we hold things while explanations are being discovered or verified, applied or revised.”

<sup>8</sup>P.McShane, “Obstacles to Metaphysical Control of Meaning”, *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* **23** (2005).

<sup>9</sup>These are listed in various places e.g. in the Website book, *Method in Theology: Revisions and Implementations*, or more compactly in *Prehumous 2*: “Metagrams and Metaphysics”.

Take even the simplest of them<sup>10</sup>:  $f(p_i ; c_j ; b_k ; z_l ; u_m ; r_n)$ <sup>11</sup> Take that symbolization where both **m** and **n** are null, so we are contemplating animal reality. There is the described cat or mouse or flea tweezered by us. Leave out for the moment the tweezering problem and think of how<sup>12</sup> we struggle to progress from description - whatever that is - to explanation. The canon of complete explanation would have us go down from the full furry-felt cat to the Schroedinger cat. But it is not a neat business: we go up and down, in and out. Still, we can symbolize achievements as from above, in a manner that echos Lonergan's discussion of the flower: "Study of the organism begins...."<sup>13</sup> Description is a layered achievement and to lift the organism into a world invisible clutched in an inner word of explanation we have to move through a communal story of science, rising in each generation to a relatively common inner word that is the core of a standard model.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>There are simpler expressions in *Insight* but they need lifting into the context of sets of operable symbolizations: e.g. the  $E_{ij}$  stuff in Chapter 8 of *Insight*, which corresponds to the  $A_{ij}$  stuff in chapter 15. Note the different contexts of the two discourses that allows one to specify luminously the correspondence.

<sup>11</sup>I would note the complex of problems that is hidden within - a complex inner word within - the semi-colon symbol: the problem of conceiving of aggreformism; the problem of distinguishing form and act; and so on to problems we are touching on here in relation to W2: the problems of the tweezers. Indeed, as you might slowly see, herein lies the direction of progress in symbolization.

<sup>12</sup>There is a deep human problem here of how-language, of material being being luminous **regarding** its exigence (see the index to *Phenomenology and Logic* under *exigence*) and dynamics, "the pure desire **regarding** the flow of empirical consciousness" (*Insight*, chapter 13, section 4: conclusion).

<sup>13</sup>*Insight*, 489. I will designate this paragraph as **Study**, and list sentences in it as e.g. **Study X**. I note in passing that the paragraph is not a straight paragraph in the first edition, and further that I object to the loose editing of Lonergan in this manner. (See, for example, the distorted presentation of the position on page 413). But it happens to suit the present dodges.

<sup>14</sup>The standard model for later zoology is of necessity a world view. The cat paces and is petted in the warm shine of a sun-star that pulls at distant galaxies "in a friendly universe" (*Method in Theology*, 117). Where does one cut off, explanatorily, the cat? "Theoretical

But back to our aging kitten, one of the kittens of chapter 8 of *Insight*. There are kittens lurking in chapter 3 too, and there is talk of kittens lurking in chapter 17.<sup>15</sup> And the canon of complete explanation, more than lurking in chapter 3 for it is a topic there, is nonetheless lurking there in its full form, the form dictated by the generalized empirical method that is practiced there but talked of later.<sup>16</sup> Chapter 3 of *Insight*, then, and its canons, require the self-luminosity of the second canon of hermeneutics which we are not sorting out: we are sorting out the sort of sorting out that needs to be done.<sup>17</sup>

Is it not, then, a useful strategy to back off from the usual hermeneutic problems to the simpler zone of talking about cats in a scientific way, but now admitting that the talk is part of the scientific problem? Studying the cat, which could be symbolized previously as a study of  $f(p_i ; c_j ; b_k ; z_l ; u_m ; r_n)$  is now complexified to include talk of the cat, and so its symbolization has to include the second metaword, W2. How? It is going to be a layered presence: there is to be, for instance, talk of the chemistry of the cat, and that talk needs a heuristics of its story. Note here that the heuristics of its story

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understanding, then, seeks to solve problems, to erect syntheses, to embrace the universe in a single view.” (*Insight*, 442)

<sup>15</sup>It is worth noting that there is the talk of talk of kittens there. More obviously, one can notice this in the series *Field Nocturnes 1-41*.

<sup>16</sup>*A Third Collection*, 141, top lines. “Generalized empirical method operates on a combination of both the data of sense and the data of consciousness: it does not treat of objects without taking into account the corresponding operations of the subject; it does not treat of the subject’s operations without taking into account the corresponding objects.” A neat exercise in coming to grips with this is to read the paragraph named **Study**, perhaps with the help of the 200 pages of *Field Nocturnes 1-41* devoted to it. The operations of studying the plant include reading and writing about the plant. In the third stage of meaning, reading and writing are to be luminous to the teenage subject, and that is to occur only if the **Childout Principle** (see *Cantower* 41) is operative from womb to kindergarden and on through grade one.

<sup>17</sup>The point made in the previous note poses a major challenge, a challenge that foundational thinking leaps to in fantasy, and that doctrinal thinking and talking proposes mercilessly. Can you imagine a re-reading of *Insight* within the control of meaning that would have the book and the print enter the invisible: “Oh world invisible we clutch thee”?

is to be, so to speak, a heuristics of two stories: explanatory talk and descriptive talk, and, alas, their interweaving, including the tweezer connectings and the mutual mediations of refinements. Are we asking too much? Either we are getting to grips with the task of controlling meaning or we are not, we are content to fudge. Further, if there are limits to the control of such meanings, then we have to push for a control of those limits in sets and series of incompleteness theorems.

The mention of incompleteness leads me to add further discomforts. The kitten is an incomplete cat. All we have said so far, if you like, is centered on the “static cat”, like the paragraph of *Insight* that attends to the “static plant.”<sup>18</sup> But again, we go the simplest way in our stumblings: so we stay with the stories of the static cat. And we start with an effort to symbolize the beginning of the story. So, we kill the adult cat.

A surprising and shocking move? It certainly fits in with a great deal of the teaching of zoology, where the only live thing studied in the class may be the fruit fly. Still, the point is made in *Insight*. “Essentially the same heuristic structure is applicable to the study of the psyche”<sup>19</sup> as was applied to the plant, so “a first step is a descriptive differentiation of different parts and, since most of the parts are inside, the descriptive preliminary necessitates dissection or anatomy.”<sup>20</sup> We need to get at the events - occurrences, operations - in the cat that are organic, organized, actually formed.<sup>21</sup> We are searching for, minimally, a two-layered development: “there is psychic development supervening upon organic development.”<sup>22</sup> And note that there is a tricky aspect to this: the neural manifold in the cat is unconscious: so its development is

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<sup>18</sup>*Insight*, 489.

<sup>19</sup>*Insight*, 492.

<sup>20</sup>*Insight*, 489. **Study 2.**

<sup>21</sup>See **Study 3.**

<sup>22</sup>*Insight*, 492.

analogous to plant development, where “both the underlying manifold and the higher system are unconscious.”<sup>23</sup> But the psychic development of the cat is conscious, and since we are at the moment talking of the adult cat we need not be bothered with questions of the emergence of consciousness: enough trouble to ask oneself how one proceeds to a description of the consciousness of the adult cat.

Back now to our problem of the heuristics of the two stories, both in the narrative and in the derived sense.<sup>24</sup> How are we to handle this heuristics? I would suggest that the symbolic semi-colon, ; , be viewed as a GEM 1 simple compacting of a GEM 2 explicitation of elements.<sup>25</sup> The semi-colon, after all, is the pointer to the core of our given finitude, either in pilgrimage or in everlasting, in which the two stories have an asymptotic convergence in everlasting circumincessional reality.

And, like Fermat, I have a wonderful solution to the problem: there is space to write it down, but have I time? And anyway, even if I see my way heuristically through the amazing maze of our climb to the invisible, I am “not concerned to predetermine the specific results all future generations must obtain.”<sup>26</sup>

But perhaps, since there is space, I could leave a leading clue?

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<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.* Note that there are tricky questions here about the nature of irritability, especially in certain species of plants.

<sup>24</sup>Think of “storied” windows or friezes marking the outside of different floors of a building: our imaging is helped forward by such odd hints.

<sup>25</sup>GEM 1 points to the description of generalized empirical method in *Insight*; GEM 2 refers to the definition given in note 15 above.

<sup>26</sup>*Method in Theology*, 298.

