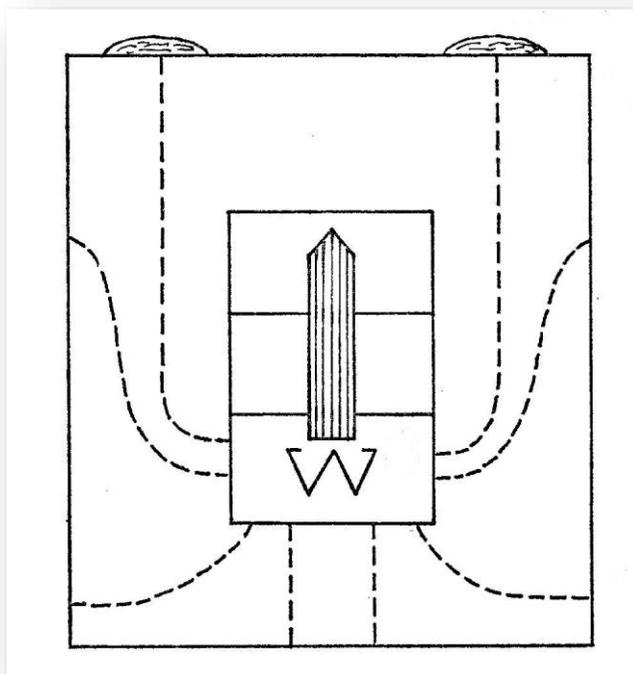


MIBOX CONTROL OF INTERPRETATION



I must stay soundly elementary here, even covering ground previously dealt with.¹ I note immediately, then, the key point on which this essay focuses: the manner in which a standard model becomes the *nomos*, the measure, the base of comparison, in a community

¹ Having finished the text of this little essay, I moved to revise the footnotes to suit the final invitation to exercise. So, my advice is that a first read be without note-reading: let the note-reading be meshed with the exercises. Which means you stop reading this note here! The first treatment of *mibox*, methinks, was in [Disputing Quests 14](#), “Doran Versus Wilkins.” There, certainly is the beginning of exercising. The real beginning is the discovery of the character of serious exercising, and how slow the whole business of growing in explanatory meaning really is. I cannot resist recalling for you my own brutal discovery of this in the autumn of 1955. I was in my graduate studies, doing a course (one professor, two students!) on a pretty famous math book, Whittaker and Watson, *Complex Analysis*. I had read the first chapter, which as I recall was fairly short. Then I tackled the first problem of dozens listed at the end of the chapters. It baffled me completely. I checked back to see if I was really reading the problems of chapter one. Some of the problems, of course, were from the famous Cambridge *Mathematical Tripos*. I recall problems later in the book that took me three days. Are you ready for this type of self-examination?

with a common scientific concern for “*cumulative and progress results.*”² First, I must assume you have identified³ the middle box of the box in the middle of the big box as what I mean by mibox. It is the what-answer box, but laced into your full what-bent⁴, a bent even towards the unknown unknown.

Even if you are only a beginner in this series or this topic, you are quite ahead of House and House’s team of the TV fiction. You have some slim grip on *what* and *is* and their meaning. The House team, however, have it over you on content and on their required type of control of interpretation. Again, you don’t have to have followed the program or indeed seen any one show, to be able to envisage this. I still recall my amazement at the competence shown by the group’s dialogue regarding cranial geography and neurochemical topologies and dynamics. Not to speak of their cranial and other tunnelings, where control of meaning had to be nanoplanktonic!

² *Method in Theology*, 5. The italics are Lonergan’s. The exercising-reading is yours. It may be a matter of self-reading here: if you have had no serious scientific experience, you may still have a discomforting memory of struggling for cumulative results in the case of some personal disorientation. But you might find it useful to venture back into *Insight*, indeed, are we not, in all cases, into “the problem of identification” (*Insight*, 582), the problem of chapter 17.

³ Our problem of identification can now bubble up into a type of life-crisis, but move in stages of small ontic cyclic minimalism, even if we face a massive phyletic crisis. I quote, frighteningly, from the beginning of the third section of [Cantover 3](#), “Round One Willing Gathering,” an invitation of almost exactly 15 years ago. “There is the problem of identification. . . . ability is one thing, and performance is another. Identification is performance.” (*Insight*, 582). Perhaps if I were to sum up the problem of my **117 Cantowers** it would be in terms of **identification** as Lonergan discusses it in this particular section of *Insight*.”

⁴ Your full what-bent is a pretty hairy problem relating to *exigence* (*CWL* 18 index), to our strange “natural desire” (*CWL* 19, 139), but here try for an adventurous reading of *Method in Theology* 53: “being intelligent includes a grasp of hitherto unnoticed or unrealized possibilities.” What might we be, in interpreting our way through the dark tunnel of history? You may find slowly and discomfortingly that the elementary climb, with its elementary exercises, still awaits you, a discovery of *Wealth of Self and Wealth of Nations: Self-Axis of the Great Ascent*, and then the mibox begins to find its place in your mibox.

The mention of geography may spark a recall in you of previous talk of a geohistorical heuristic in the case of meanings and contexts of meaning.⁵ This indeed points to a quite extraordinary detail of heuristic: details of cranial chemistry!⁶

The House team, when it comes to generalized empirical method or to details of positioning, are, of course, vacuous. They are not in this zone, and their equivalent won't be for some centuries. But, for instance, they would and do appreciate in their spontaneity the meaning of *Assembly, Completion, Comparison*.⁷

You glimpse, I hope, that we are not miles away from Lonergan's *Insight* 17.3 project, even as we mention his brilliant sublation of it. Don't be derailed by that mention, for you need only take page 250 out of the context of *Method in Theology* to have us right back with the canons of hermeneutics but, surely right forward and startled in our reading of, say, the first canon, where the interpreter is House and his prospective audience is his colleagues. Note that, in the quoting, I replace "universal viewpoint" with the words "fullest genetic viewpoint."

First, then, there is the canon of relevance. It demands that the interpreter begin from the fullest genetic viewpoint and that his interpretation convey some differentiation of the protean notion of being. By beginning from the fullest genetic viewpoint there is eliminated the relativity not only of the interpreter to his prospective audience but also of both the interpreter and audience to places and times, schools and sects. By placing the meaning of the interpretation within the protean notion of being there are secured (1) a common field for all possible interpretations, (2) the possibility of an exact

⁵ Anything mentioned may or may not spark a creative recall in you. The notes so far beg for a patient creative openness. Yet in my realistic ramblings I assume that you may be no better informed than the actors and scriptwriters of *House* about the demands of authenticity. But mind you there is some pretty good dialogue about it, and there is a decent intolerance of bullshit that offends the transcendental precepts. At all events I think it realistic and useful to repeat the sentence of the text at note 11: "Focus on the intellectual conversion to understanding the genetics of progress."

⁶ A zone of detail helps shake up imaging, pointing us back to the pre-natal brain: Joan Stiles and Terry L. Jernigan, "The Basics of Brain Development," *Neuropsychol Review* 2010 Dec; 20(4): 327–348. Published online 2010 Nov 3. Yes, this is a bit much, but the admission into consciousness of the reference is a jolt towards the truth. Think this out as an exercise. The House team sweated their way towards competence. The Lonergan team have done no such sweating. They are in "no man's land" (*CWL* 6, 121, line 22: see p. 155, line 13: "never bitten by theory"). No amount of rich scholarly work gets you out of that lunatic arrogant place.

⁷ This may be a jolt towards a fresh reading of these words, beginning at *Assembly*, the last word on page 249 of *Method in Theology*. Apply them to any of the House shows, or if you are not into TV, any serious medical situation. But we shall get into the context of the full challenging climb in *Interpretation* 13, "Interpreting Historical Sense."

statement of the differences between opposed interpretations, and (3) a reasonable hope that such opposition will be eliminated by further appeals to the available data.⁸

The available data for House and company is, of course, primarily, the cranium with the kink that is in the sick bed. The available data for the theologian is all the crania of present humanity within the kink of the longer cycle of decline in the sick bed of the negative Anthropocene Age. The data, in the second case, is, of course, humungously larger, but as you muse along with the analogy might it not dawn on you that “the children of this world are wiser than the children of light”?⁹

I think back now to my teaching of first year classes in mathematical physics and, paralleling that world, send you off to do two days exercises over the reading of the first canon, quoted at note 8, in the two contexts of “House” and “Lonergan”, or any other helpful corner of the field of dreams. But forget about 50 shades of luminous positionings, religious, moral, intellectual. Focus on the intellectual conversion to understanding the genetics of progress.¹⁰ Perhaps even carry on your fantasy to having House and his team getting into the conflicts of the 1833 Overture.

⁸ *Insight*, 609. The run of exercises here pivots on reading and rereading this for different serious groups.

⁹ *Luke* 16:8. The quotation swings up back into the final chapters of *Phenomenology and Logic*, *CWL* 18. Genetic diagnosis and prognosis “asks merely for creativity, for an interdisciplinary theory that at first will be denounced as absurd, then will be admitted to be true but obvious and insignificant, and perhaps finally be regarded as so important that its adversaries will claim that they themselves discovered it” (“Healing and Creating in History,” *CWL* 15, 106). Lonerganism does not dare denounce functional genetics, but the division of labour is regarded by most of my colleagues as “obvious and insignificant.” Perhaps some ecologists will get the point, as the air becomes unbreathable.

¹⁰ This is our full challenge in these exercises guided by Interpretation essays. Yes, it is the same challenge as *Insight* 17.3, and finding why the weavings differ, “why a faithful interpretation should differ from the original expression” (*Insight*, 586), can be weaved into the challenge. Are you not puzzled, for instance, about my dodging a discussion of the universal viewpoint?