

## EXERCISES IN INTERPRETATION

I begin by recalling two footnotes of the previous essay, the 5<sup>th</sup> as is, the 10<sup>th</sup> slightly modified.

<sup>5</sup> 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 in-formed 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.”

<sup>10</sup> The full challenge in these exercises 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?

Let me home in now on the final question of note 10, and give you some help to see that the answer is contained in the end of note 5.

What I am pushing towards—“cajoling or forcing attention”<sup>1</sup>—is some appreciation of an analogue: the fruit of “House-work” with the universal viewpoint towards a limited goal, a goal that parallels the full “Field-goal” of Futurology. The aim of the “House-work,” as the show would have it, is to continue to apply—and modify in doing do—an up-to-date genetics of progress.

Is the House team working with the universal viewpoint? They are working in the mood summarily expressed in note 5 above. Can you imagine the team working in the mood of “academic disciplines”?<sup>2</sup> Might you try to imagine that now, or today, or this week, or this year? If you take the time, you will find that you are thus made able to freshly and astonishedly turn the first page of *Method in Theology*. “Clearly enough, these approaches to the problem of

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<sup>1</sup> *Insight*, 423.

<sup>2</sup> *Method in Theology*: the end words of page 3.

method do little to advance the less successful subjects.”<sup>3</sup> Think of the “less successful subjects” that are House’s patients, then spread your imagination to the present shambles of global progress, with, e.g., the commonsense—and mainly nonsense—idiocy of a pseudo-economic theory that suits the dimwits who govern nations and banks. Think also of the “less successful subjects” trapped by the game of minimum wage. Then think of the “academic disciplines” approach that make it highly unlikely that Lonerganism will ever effect the great good that Lonergan intended. Ho ho I must halt this as I warm to a rant!

Later we will push more to see better the strategy of my emphasis on content of progress as opposed to position, but you do see that, yes, the House team are a decent lot with no problem about conversion to theory? This, indeed, may be your main problem, manifested perhaps by you not taking me seriously about the exercising that I recommended at the end of the previous essay. The problem is to face the challenge of being converted to effective explanatory thinking. Perhaps, indeed, I should continue my rant. This week I find yet another lengthy introduction to Lonergan, with no bent towards thinking explanatorily, no call for serious exercising. I have seen them flow forth steadily in the past 50 years. The point of the first paragraph of *Insight* is missed. The pointing of the end of that first page there is missed, indeed skipped in classes by my expert colleagues. Yes, I admit: that is a tough one to handle well. But what of the problem of getting square roots in *Understanding and Being*, or in *Phenomenology and Logic*?<sup>4</sup> From that little adventure you can sniff out the flaw in 21<sup>st</sup> century reliance on uncomprehended techniques, large and small, which are either erroneous or dated or both.

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, the beginning of page 4.

<sup>4</sup> See my [Wealth of Self and Wealth of Nations](#), 19–21 for my detailed invitation to this exercise. I would note that *Understanding and Being*, CWL 5 (p. 55) has a different square-root problem than *Phenomenology and Logic*, CWL 18, (p. 10). I recall having to take a stand against the general editor in my refusing to replace the illustration of CWL 5 in the editing of CWL 18. While I am at it, I did not refuse the elimination of lengthy contextualizations from my editing—requested by a reader. The reader’s comments and the missing stuff are available in *Lack in the Beingstalk: A Giant’s Causeway* (Axial Publishing, 2006) chapters 4 and 5. I recall the editor tinkering in other zones. I particularly regret not pushing for the survival of a dense comment of Lonergan on the work of Emil Post. See note 15 on page 131 of *Phenomenology and Logic*. My pointing here is not an academic distraction. To shift our culture of thinking to an effective explanatory heuristic of historical consciousness requires massive innovations in techniques and symbolizations, something hinted at in Lonergan’s scribbled notes of February 1965.

And what of the larger central adventure of “63 articles in a row”<sup>5</sup> that would put you luminously straight about the House strategy regarding “what to do”?<sup>6</sup> Did you read them without exercising? Perhaps you did not read them at all: so, you are happy with the invention of an “early Lonergan” who likewise, obviously, did not read them.

There is a sense in which the House program asks us to read them, if we are to interpret the program with some serious fullness. Take for instance the problem of arriving creatively at two or three plausible plans of medical action. Are you sufficiently at home in transcendental method to be luminous about this in the way that Thomas is? But such luminosity, it would seem, belongs to a later generation, in which the evolutionary sport Thomas will have his day and say.<sup>7</sup>

For now we may have to be content to tracking along with the common sense of House’s group in tackling the basic exercise that I have been leading us towards since I introduced it at the end of the fourth essay. That exercise is coming to grips with the nine words: “analogous to common sense there is a historical sense.”<sup>8</sup> But to get into that exercise you have to set yourself a challenge equivalent to the education of the House team. Are you up to pushing for a grip on the story of the climb to present cranial chemodynamics? Or, easier, getting a grip on the present front-line system which includes various genetic structures and restructures the viewing of the past climbing?<sup>9</sup> You need to face that challenge somehow in some zone, or your common sense will continue to betray you. And note that the challenge is not one of

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<sup>5</sup> *Grace and Freedom. Operative Grace in the Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, CWL 1, 94.

<sup>6</sup> Think usefully of our challenge as bridging the massive existential gap between these words are normally spoken and the heuristic discernment of late contemplative struggling with “a grasp of hitherto unnoticed or unrealized possibilities” (*Method in Theology*, 53). Think of the molecular embeddedness of the quest, as posed below, with brutal compactness, in notes 10 and 13. See also note 4 of the previous essay.

<sup>7</sup> It is quite clear to me that Aquinas’ climb here is still beyond us. There is a strange lightsomeness in his dedication of the book to that bright Arab, John of Damascus. I would suggest that most Lonergan students have still to catch up with Damascene’s drive, with his sense of molecularity. See *Lack in the Beingstalk*, 19–25, for some pointers. Are you not startled, e.g., that he could write, “the organ of the imagination is the anterior ventricle of the brain”? *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>8</sup> *Insight*, 587.

<sup>9</sup> This is a suggested strategy of first coming to grips with the best of today, the front system of a genetic sequence of systems. That grip grounds, with cyclic climbing, the uplift of all previous systems, showing each as “better than was the reality” (*Method in Theology*, 251) of the system or of the historic flow which brought it forth at the time.

getting into the story of, say, intellectual positioning. The story will be of slim significance in the future: it is to be recognized later as a pre-science vulgar non-empirical puttering. Even moral positioning will turn towards refinements rather than musing over vulgarities. And issues of ultimacy will spiral towards an invisibility of symphonic molecularity.

But let us come down from such fantasy now: you need, this 60<sup>th</sup> year of *Insight's* neglect, to hunt for an entry into genetic story. Might it be a struggle with the story of the flower? Or might it home in on the front-edge growth-perspective of global religious community: a 5-note beat quietly emerging in an 8<sup>th</sup> symphony on the way to cloud 9.<sup>10</sup>

So we prepare to enter the heart of the matter, of what's the matter with a simple historical sense, apparently suggestively harmless, open, but in fact promising to hold us down in shadowland sickness for millennia.<sup>11</sup>

We have weeks before I attempt to point further to the grounding of the realization of Loneragan's Dream. They are months when a forum of collaboration opens.<sup>12</sup> What might happen to us if this begins to lead us to specify better, through the thirteenth essay, our grip of what the story is in "the thirteenth place"?<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> I am thinking of Bruckner's 8<sup>th</sup> symphony here, with those five famous notes emerging quietly and growing to dominate the symphonic climb. The five notes in Bruckner are doh, me, fah, soh, soh, where the final 'soh' is an octave lower. The five 'notes' of humanity's climb? Think of the dominance of adventurousness in all five of the transcendentals, Be Attentive, Be Intelligent, Be Reasonable, Be Responsible, Be in Love. The challenge is to thus think within the climb of *The Interior Lighthouse*, finding—see note13 here—so as to find that the grounding adventurousness of the universe is what is pointed to in the last line of "the thirteenth place" of chapter 20 of *Insight*: 722, ending the pointing of the last paragraph.

<sup>11</sup> Our challenge is to see and seize this sickness in our own common sense, our own failure to read ourselves through the sixth and seventh chapters of *Insight*. Might we face that reading together this winter, this century?

<sup>12</sup> A forum would help with the 'reading together' of the previous footnote. [Interpretation](#), a forum focused on meeting our challenge, will be opened on July 1<sup>st</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> *Insight* 683; 720. The existential meshing of these two thirteenth places is a lifelong, indeed, eschatological enterprise. So, you might envisage this thirteenth footnote as pointing to a limit zone, a field goal, of the projected communal *Interior Lighthouse*.