

Joistings 4
Personality Types

The title of this essay may bring to mind for some the complexities of the Meyers-Briggs analysis of types of personality and the concrete use of that analysis in determining the bent of various people in life. Such a reminding is good and indeed worth enlarging in relation to our topic if you are so inclined.¹ Indeed, one can reach back into Chinese, Indian or medieval classifications, or stay right up to date with modifications of the efforts of Freud and Jung, Gardiner and Maslow, etc etc. But what we are at here, as you know by now, is helpful doctrinal sketching. So, your existential question in this course on spirituality may well be simply “What is my spiritual bent?” And I could give you simple help by talking with Thomas about the two types of life, contemplative and active, or by rambling a bit, as I enjoy, about the three Therasas.

Thomas’ distinction is pretty obvious, though a venture into his writings will reveal subtleties.² What do I mean by the three Theresa? For me it is a matter of rough identification of three types of people, but a few remarks about that identification can help us on our way. My three Therasas - I stay with a common spelling of that name - are Theresa of Avila, Teresa of Liseaux, Theresa of India (so named by me). First, then, consider Theresa of India, the tireless worker for the poor, best know perhaps, in both East and West, of the three ladies. Her focus in life was on “What to do?”. Not, notice,

¹You are probably familiar with the Myers-Briggs tradition. A recent presentation is David Keirse, *Understand Me II. Temperament, Character, Intelligence*, Prometheus Nemesis Book Company, 1998. If not, you can muse over any other classification, ancient or modern, or see whether you might move towards some classification of your own related to the elements of meaning. Below I give the lead of five levels. But think of the complexities of taking sets of 4, 5, 6 elements together; think of people who are ‘good all round’ etc, or of those, like Leonardo da Vinci, with multiple aesthetic and scientific differentiations. Such musing helps towards the fantasy of a quite richer global culture.

²A classic treatment is Thomas’ *Secunda Secundae*, qq. 179-182. The present poise raises the issue of an operative sublation of these orientations.

on the “What to do? question”, which is another personality type, the one that you came close to - maybe! - when you worked on the previous *Joisting*. Theresa moved in Faith towards doing, not towards thinking about doing.³ The identification is rough. The little lady from India certainly had her times of vision and her hours of reflective presentation of global needs. There was a famous startling occasion when she came to lecture at the convent attached to my own university. She cut her lecture short by expressing her candid view of the opulence of the convent building in which she was speaking. At all event, you know the type of person I mean: the Marthas, whether famous like Catherine of Sienna or Joan of Arc, or part of the multitude of which George Eliot wrote: “Many Therasas have been born who found for themselves no epic life wherein there was a constant unfolding of far-resonant action.”⁴

The quotation from George Eliot, who was in fact Mary Evans, is from a passage in which she is writing about Theresa of Avila in one of her “practical” moments - a childhood pilgrimage to convert the Muslims! - but for me this Theresa represents the whatting type, even though she wasn’t bent towards focusing on the what-question as the heart of her matter. Indeed, most people think of her as the mystic. But I take her as a representative of the what-focus, the focus on kataphatic theology,⁵ because of her view that, if she had a choice between a holy spiritual guide and one who understood

³Notice the obscurity glossed over here. Obviously, thinking about doing is something that Theresa did. But not *Joistings 3* thinking! Think about doing some thinking about that, then think (about)³ it all. For the meaning of (about)³ see section 2 of *Joistings 1*.

⁴Georg Eliot, in the Prologue to *Middlemarch*.

⁵Best pause here, in a reflection on *Method in Theology* 341, over the relevant distinction between two theologies. “An orientation to transcendent mystery illustrates negative or apophatic theology which is content to say what God is not Its positive nourishment is God’s gift of his love however, if there is to be an affirmative or kataphatic, as well as an apophatic, theology, there must be confronted the question whether God is an object”. Don’t warp the meaning of ‘object’ here with conventional thinking: rather muse over the reality of friendship: do you not make your friend an object of your concern that drives you to think about them, that moves you to ask them, Who are you?

matters spiritual, she would opt for the latter. Now, curiously, my selection of Theresa to represent theoretic orientation is very significant in the present cultural context. Most of those interested in theology and philosophy have, alas, been educated in a literary tradition that gives no serious lift into the serious effort to understand in this mode. So, I would hope for this type of conversion at least: a conversion that would acknowledge the importance of explanatory understanding, for others, for the next generation. We will be pausing over this topic in *Joistings 9*.

My final Theresa is that wonderful crazy Frenchwoman⁶ that I think of in relation to what is called apophatic theology. That, basically, is her Little Way. The focus of such a life is on the Is-answer that is given abundantly and anonymously by the divinity, but identified by Christians in Jesus.⁷ It need not be heavily mystical in the many Theresa “who find for themselves no epic life”. Its predominant contemporary illustration is perhaps the Zen tradition, whose importation into Christianity has been a focus of attention for my fellow-Ulsterman, William Johnston.⁸ We will have more to say about it as we move along through the *Joistings*.

But let us continue from the rough identification of three types. Think of them, then, as a noticing of bent or talent in the exercise of three of the elements of meaning identified in the standard diagrams that are now somewhat familiar. *Joistings 3* has pointed to the fact that those diagrams need complexification in the area of action. Still, the diagrams give a start to further identification: indeed a later systematization could bring forth a grounded replacement of the Meyer-Briggs, or other such, categorization of types. So, we started with three types: talentedness in focusing on the What-question,

⁶In the mid-1950s I was inspired by the excellent little book of Etienne Robo, *Two Portraits of St. Teresa of Liseaux*, Sands and Co., London and Glasgow, 1955, which I recommend.. Recently I found a revised edition of 1957, which added an appendix, pp. 228-238, “The Neurosis of St. Teresa”.

⁷More below on this identification when we reflect on Faith.

⁸Relevant works of Johnston are listed by Lonergan, *A Third Collection*, 67.

in focusing on the What-to-do question, and in focusing - or should I say resting in, poising in? - the Is-answer.

But in what Is-answer? And what of the other Is-answer, what of the other elements of meaning? These are questions to be followed up. There are obvious follow-ups that, again, should lead to more precise classifications. Think, for instance, of the what-level that, when operating at its best, is to be associated with theory, *theoria*.⁹ The level in the diagram draws attention to three elements.¹⁰ Might you not quite easily think of types among your acquaintances that show talent on these three elements alone? There is the natively curious person, reminiscent of the two-year-old whatting through the days. There is the bright-ideas person who can brainstorm but somehow not add coherence. And there is the third type who can put the discovery in any area in a sequence of premises and conclusions, the Euclids of this world.

Now I do not wish to follow up these suggestions, a much larger task than what we are about here. In a previous essay I wrote of Lonergan as being a sort of young Linnaeus, giving the beginnings of later centuries' classifications of plants.¹¹ In the present essay I wish to give a narrower but helpful focus to our searchings. That focus is continuous with another previous essay, the Preface to *Searching for Cultural Foundations*, where I was trying to show the unity of the five chapters by different authors: as with the three Therasas, a rough identification. Yet the identification is quite suggestive. "While Lonergan writes explicitly of only three conversions and five generic differentiations of consciousness it is plausible to suppose that there are five generic types of conversion and of differentiations that can be put in loose correspondence. By

⁹On *theoria* among the Greek Fathers, see Lonergan, "Mission and Spirit", *A Third Collection*, 27. There also he writes about Aristotle's ideal of the theoretic life, which comes closer to the drive of the present series of essays.

¹⁰The what-question, the what-insight, the what-formulation.

¹¹The essay referred to is the last essay in the Quodlibet series, Quodlibet 21, which resulted from a collaboration with the Old Testament expert, Sean McEvenue.

happy coincidence the five chapters of the volume can also be put in correspondence with these generic types of foundational personality development.”¹² Here I merely enlarge on that suggestion in such a way as to call for future collaborative reaching in scientific dialectics and genetic systematics: specialties that are topics elsewhere.

So, let me simplify in a style continuous with prior efforts in this course on spirituality. Five levels have been identified, so I carry forward in a manner that is pedagogical to suggest an extended identification. Is it totally accurate? That remains as a problem of correction and refinement. But it certainly makes preliminary sense, and it manages to lay aside various disputes. So, towards a preliminary five-finger hold on classification, think both of the five classic causes and of the “five ways” of Thomas: can you connect them?¹³ Now, I would note an oddity here: the “can you connect them?” is really a question about your development as a whatter. The what-question seems central to our human lives, and it is the question that is central to the spirituality that is the concern of this series.¹⁴ In *Joistings 8* we will face that issue fully with the - literally - crucial Christian What-question. “That Christ’s life and, above all, his death were an expression - meaning and value incarnately conveyed - is not in itself something that had to wait for Lonergan to discover it. *What* was expressed on the cross, however, has

¹²P.McShane (ed), *Searching for Cultural Foundations*, University Press of America, 1984, in the Preface, “Distant Probabilities of Persons presently Going Home Together in Transcendental Process”, vi.

¹³You will find helpful pointers on this both in Cantower 19, on the five ways of Thomas towards affirming God’s existence and in Cantower 29, on the relation of the levels to the canons of empirical inquiry.

¹⁴There are complexities here related both to the meshing of modally distinct what-question (e.g. what am I , what am I to be) and to the *Praxis* character of the new theology and spirituality. But one complexity I would urge you to avoid is the tendency to turn inadvertently towards various mystical or apophatic traditions. In *Joistings 8* [in the text after note 13] I will treat this problem in a more refined manner that makes precise the meaning of analogical knowledge. But meantime there is the clear statement of intent of note 34 below.

long been a vexing question.”¹⁵ But here I merely wish to draw your attention to the centrality of that second of five “levels” of conscious orientation, a centrality shared with its modal companion of the fourth level.

So, think of decisions, simple or life-shattering. Am I to play music today, or as a career? Am I to pray, within soundless music¹⁶, today, or as a career? Whatever the challenge, whatting is central: what am I?, what am I to be? We are back with the end of the paragraph about Theresa of Avila: if I am searching for a way, I prefer a guide who understands to a guide with a mystic glow. We have here a primary piece of any ‘me’: a bent that somehow does not need converting.¹⁷

Perhaps that is a reason for Lonergan’s not naming it as a conversion, as I do. My name for it is not a good one: “theoretic conversion”, no more suitable or “telling” as a name than “academic interest”. Think of the phrases “a merely academic question”, “a merely theoretic question”. But I am not about to try a new name just now. Conversion to theory is “merely” a conversion to honest and necessary seriousness. But it reaches, in its childhood neurodynamics, beyond all lesser interests to all, to embrace, in an explanatory fashion, the universe,¹⁸ an exigence to be embraced, in that strange

¹⁵Hefling, 71.

¹⁶I think here of John of the Cross, of T.S.Eliot, and of Shakespeare’s *Pericles* listening to “the music of the spheres!”(Act V, .scene ii, .line 231). Useful in the present context is section 2.5 of *Lack in the Beingstalk. A Giants Causeway*, Axial Press, Halifax, 2005, “Reaching Buds: Kavanagh, Shakespeare, Socrates, You and I”. There is Eliot of *The Four Quartets*: “music heard so deeply / That it is not heard at all, but you are the music / While the music lasts”. And from John of the Cross’ “Songs between the Soul and the Bridegroom” there are those lines, “Before the dawn comes round / Here in the night dead-hushed with all its glammers, / The music without sound, / The solitude that clamors, / The supper that revives us and enamors.”

¹⁷Sadly, what it gets regularly in the early years is diverting. On this see the beginning of chapter 3 of *Wealth of Self and Wealth of Nations*, a chapter which continues on the present topic of developing the what-question. There is a deeper issue here, regarding the natural conversion of the mind, treated at length by Lonergan in various writings.

¹⁸Recall *Insight* 417[442]. “Theoretic understanding, then, seeks to solve problems, to erect syntheses, to embrace the universe in a single view”.

way, by All. Yet the neurodynamics can cycle in the rhythms of basic sin, even patterned with axial rhythms of brutal bias.¹⁹ Then it becomes all the more necessary for the inner child to cry in community, What am I, What am I to be? And the child reaches towards the Ultimate in an asking of Who are You? What do You desire of me, of history?

This is a topic that requires broad and coherent reflection but I wish you only to ramble around the possible varieties of this bent and its genetic development: one may find one self or another caught up in any of a huge variety of interests: the physicist lost in wondering about the path of a particle; the zoologist caught up with the marks of a beast. So, there is a phylum of theoretic conversions, and each conversion has its genetic story. And that genetic bent solves “a logical puzzle. How, one may ask, can one reach new laws?”²⁰ And the bent needs flow, against conventional specialist tides, towards the ocean.²¹

This is the conversion that is central to the present series, and its reaching is within the exercises demanded by each doctrinal *Joisting*. But what I am claiming regarding its range and genetics applies to all the other conversions and differentiations. I am not going to enter into details about these others, but a general point needs to be made. Why distinguish between conversions and differentiations?²²

¹⁹See the index of *Insight*, under *bias*. I would note here a present bias towards various forms of specialization and academic totalitarianism that is challenged by Lonergan’s discovery of functional specialization. It involves a complex differentiation of consciousness that I do not wish to deal with here. It is clearly the central topic of *Method in Theology*. Something will be said about it in *Joistings 8*.

²⁰*Insight*, 166[190].

²¹This is the key startling point made by Lonergan in *Insight* 417[442]. See the key text cited at note 18 above.

²²In chapter four of *Process* I suggested shifting terminology: for *conversion* use *displacement*, for *differentiation* use *transformation*. There are good reasons, even from Lonergan’s writings for this change. And there are obvious reasons too: e.g. *conversion* is not a

Think of the conversions as abrupt displacements, and of the differentiations as the processes of gentler transformation. Within that thinking reflect on certain asymmetries that you may notice - we shall attend here only to the particular case of Faith. Some conversions, but not all, require prior differentiating: one is existentially converted to theory only by sweatily climbing into it.²³

I must cut short my doctrinal pointing by presenting a listing that dovetails with our pedagogical levels. Above I mentioned 5 generic differentiations and I suggested five phyla of conversions: why not link them up with the levels? Then one has, in the order of the levels, vital, theoretic, intellectual, moral, and religious conversion. It is just a nominal listing, bringing to you lots of puzzles. Why do I associate moral conversion, and its differentiations among which is scholarship, with the what-to-do question? What about the various conversions - aesthetic, psychic, ecological, neural, etc written about by Doran, Tyrell, Conn, McGrath? They are genera and species and varieties within a peculiarly complex phylum of vital orientation that ranges over the human conjugates of physics, chemistry, botany and zoology.

Obviously we skim here over large future tasks, but our present task of specifying the core of spirituality and indeed of a particular spirituality, requires that we move on with some pointers regarding Faith both in its sublation of belief and in its theoretic reachings. Fortunately, we have the pointers in selected readings. Chapter 7 of *Wealth of Self* gives leads on believing, and of course it borrows its pointing from the analysis in *Insight*.²⁴ The "Analysis of Faith" is an available translation of Lonergan's original Latin text. Need I repeat that the pointers must be taken seriously, slowly taken

good secular word; again, *displacement* covers wider possibilities: perversion, diversion, reversion, etc..

²³This need qualifying. One can be converted to theory in the sense that, while one is not capable of it, one glimpses the need for it, encourages it. Contrast the attitude described in *Insight*, 717[422], 542[565].

²⁴*Insight* chapter 20, section 4.2.

in, intussuscepted?²⁵ And the taking in cannot but have its moments of “ecstasy,”²⁶ even of “startling strangeness.”²⁷ Further, the taking in that is contemplative in our new kataphatic sense of whatting can be thus ecstatic and strange. A recent article points to the need to express such moment to each other²⁸ and so I recall now, vivid still after thirty five years, my break-through reading of the original *Analysis Fidei* of Lonergan. I took it for a reflective walk, knowing that I had somehow missed the pointing. I walked south from Dublin through traffic-stacked streets, beyond the third hour, beyond the tenth mile, and yes, that was it. What was it? It was the manner in which the light of Faith gave one not just the message but the messenger, the song **and** the Singers.²⁹

No doubt this theoretic shift was a leap within Faith, but it was not a leap of Faith: it was a theoretic leap, sweatily sought on a hot day following months of molecular searching.

The theoretic search is a slow molecular one, and to find and cultivate this is to step out of the axial period. Further, to find that it is so, and such a step-out, is another

²⁵There is a good deal more to think out (about)³ this. It relates to the problem of overcoming a settled nominalist familiarity and moving to what I call *molecularization*. That movement involves detailed exercises such as were mentioned in relation to the study of entropy in *Joistings 2*, section 3. I illustrated it in relation to the humanities in the discussion of the intussuscepting a poem of Hopkins in the Epilogue of *Music That Is Soundless*.

²⁶I recall Lonergan’s comments on “the ‘ecstatic’ character of developing historical insights” (*Method in Theology*, 217). The serious thinker, especially the foundational thinker, lives in an orientation towards a regular ecstasy of shifting perspective, becoming a stranger to themselves of yesterday. But this is a large strange topic; we will touch on it further in the next *Joisting*.

²⁷See *Insight* xxviii[22] on this strangeness in relation to intellectual conversion.

²⁸I am referring to the existential reflections of Richard M. Liddy in “‘A Shower of Insights’. Autobiography and Intellectual Conversion”, *Method. Journal of Lonergan Studies*, 21 (2003), 125-144.

²⁹Useful here are the two sections (1.4 and 5.4) on “Song of the Adorable” in *Process. Introducing Themselves to Young (Christian) Minders*, available on www.philipmcs Shane.ca.

leap of discovery, one that I expressed somewhat in two Cantower titles: “Sunflower, Speak to Us of Growth,”³⁰ “Tadpoles, Tell us Talling Tales.”³¹ Cantower 2 was the beginning of that curious enterprise, and might well be of use in our searching for the meaning of the organism called Jesus. Cantower 69 will never be written, since I halted at Cantower 41,³² but perhaps our next *Joisting* will help.

The Faith that you have - and it need not be Christian or even identifiably religious, but **only** the embrace, the clasp, of “a friendly universe”³³ - may be the hidden gift of a childhood life, unecstatically received, unecstatically present in daily doings. But it can be intussuscepted, or, as I now prefer to say, molecularized.

That molecularization can be the fruit of a Faithful life, unambitious in contemplative bent: I recall now an elderly member of one of my choirs radiantly speaking to me, after a service, out of such a molecularization. I would note that such a state is what I might call a molecularization in the self of Christ as substance in contrast to molecularization through Christ and self as subjects, which is a molecularization luminously cultivated by whatting (about)³ Jesus and His Vision.³⁴ Teresa of Liseaux once consoled her elder sister about death by telling her that “God will sip you up like a

³⁰The title of Cantower 2.

³¹The title of Cantower 58.

³²Cantower 41 was due for posting on the website on August 1st 2005. It was in fact posted in February 2004, ahead of schedule. What terminated the Cantower project was the discernment of a need for a foundational supporting of the recycling process, nudged into the open by an Australian request for collaboration. The nudgings and collaborations continue, as was noted in *Joistings 1*.

³³*Method in Theology*, 117, line 13.

³⁴This is a very complex topic relating to degrees of the overcoming of neglected or truncated subjectivity (see Lonergan, *A Second Collection*, 73) in the person who prays, and the level of self- appropriation attained. It seems appropriate to remind you in this concluding paragraph, especially where I am writing about the mystical bent of The Little Flower, that the type of contemplation and spirituality that I advocating here is non-mystical: it is simply the hard (and suffering: see *Joistings 8*) task of thinking about one’s Faith and beliefs.

drop of dew.”³⁵ But is there not an intimation of immortality, a mutual sipping of satisfaction³⁶ available to us in this life, a chemistry of our pilgrim state sensed as such, nerves luminously needy for the New Jerusalem?

³⁵*St. Teresa of Liseaux: Her Last Conversations*, translated from the original manuscripts by John Clarke O.C.D., ICS Publications, Washington D.C., 1977, 37.

³⁶The topic of *Joistings* 8.