

Quodlibet 6

Comparison and Integral Canons of Inquiry

6.1 Introducing An Elementary Exercise.

The exercise consists in reading¹ the sentence from lines 6-7 of page 250, within the challenge of the page:

“*Comparison* examines the completed assembly to seek out affinities and oppositions”.

In this sentence the 65-year-old Lonergan expresses a powerful sublation of large areas of difficulty surrounding *The Sketch* and the Canons of chapter 17 of *Insight*. The exercise involves finding a meaning of the sentence for yourself.

Before you tackle this exercise I would have you pause very seriously over an analogy, a paralleling of this exercise with another type of exercise in reading. This parallel is very personal to me, like Proust’s taste of tea. The memory of its startling strangeness comes from Autumn of 1955, when I was doing a graduate course in mathematics under a professor Timoney in University College Dublin. The only other member in the class was Lochlainn O’Raifeartaigh, later to replace Schroedinger - who was still there - in the Institute of Theoretical Physics in Dublin. We were using a classic

¹I recall, as I did in the previous *Quodlibet*, Lonergan’s reflections on allegory and metaphysics in the first section of Chapter 17 of *Insight*. One would be helped here by my suggested dictionary entry of 2500 A.D. in “Systematics: A Language of the Heart”, *The Redress of Poise*, [Website book]. More recently colleagues have found it useful to muse over a single imaginary page, somewhat like page 250 of *Method*, but now one written in medieval times about the drive of Butterfield’s little book on the scientific revolution. Would not it have been misread then, as p. 250 is under-read now? This is something to come back to in the next *Quodlibets*.

Of course, what is written in this *Quodlibet* continues the efforts of the series SOFDAWARE which was dedicated to beginning a serious reading of *Method*, page 250. But it seems to me that some further brooding over this problem is warranted. Let us follow up this with the pointers of note 7. *Quodlibet 5* already gave a twist to the seriousness of the reading.

text: Whittaker and Watson, *Complex Analysis*.² As the year progressed the three of us tackled, at home, the exercises listed at the ends of the chapters: sometimes only one of us would return with the relevant break-throughs.

The dawning for me that I am talking about, cherished since, re-membered freshly even now in chemical embrace, occurred at the end of my first enthusiastic reading of the first chapter of the book, a short ten pages or so. Then came the exercises, several pages of them and most of the exercises had some well-know name tagged on at the end. The taste of tease here was the shock that I was unable to **read** these exercises: indeed I remember looking back to the beginning of the chapter to make sure I had not somehow skipped to a later one. But my fundamental discovery was that I had not read the chapter: and I slowly discovered what it was to read. By the time I had fought my way through the exercises at the end of the chapter I had genuinely read it: I was **with** the authors. The book became for me a revolutionary study, characterizing my reading ever since.

But I mention *Revolutionary Study* deliberately and now as a title: the title of an Exercise of Chopin, the last of his Opus 10 *Studies*. I had in fact learned to read with that Exercise, almost a decade earlier, though it was years before I merged the two experiences in a fundamental orientation towards the reading of life, of being and becoming. And I mention both these instances because one of them, or indeed neither, may resonate with you. But I would wish you get the point from some instance of your own collection, recollection. I recall Lonergan remarking somewhere that present education fails to teach people how to read: but, at all events, he makes the point abundantly in the Epilogue to his *Verbum* articles. So, find your own *Exercise* instance: it could be from some other musical instrument and style: oddly, or not so oddly, I flip to my memories of Czerny, famous for his piano exercises. Yesterday I had occasion to handle what for me is his most famous exercise: his piano transcription of Beethoven's

²As I recall, it is a 1950s Cambridge University Press publication, still available.

Kreutzer Sonata, something Lonergan cherished into his old age, a memory of himself in small-boy poise in a garden, listening to his mother's fingers. And you may be helped in this freshening startling struggle by what I said in the previous *Quodlibet* of the notion of *Classic* associated with Friedrich Schlegel.³ In a rough demythologizing I remarked that a classic could be, simply, a very good graduate text. Chopin's *Studies* are very good, and his *Ballades* are even better graduate texts.

Or, my present hope and your hope too, I hope, is that you, gracehoper, may be helped along by this little exercise!⁴

6.2 The Exercise

Let us give the exercise more formality, like those exercises of my mathematics days. You might think of it as an exercise tagged onto *The Sketch* of chapter 17 of *Insight*, or tagged on to the third canon of hermeneutics, "the canon of successive approximations".⁵

Comparison examines the completed assembly to seek out affinities and oppositions. The heuristic notion of comparison proposed here merges a set of sublations and transpositions. It merges the two sets of canons of inquiry; it sublates Kuhn's historical analyses of paradigm shifts; it transposes the confusions of European hermeneutics into an empirical tradition yielding progressive explanatory results.

There you have it: a fuller version of the challenge of that sentence on page 250 of *Method in Theology*. But, you may say, I didn't read it that way. Recall my foolishness in reading that first chapter of *Complex Analysis*; perhaps recall your own foolishness in

³You can find the quotation on page 161 of *Method in Theology*.

⁴The Joycean references may be lost on you, but no matter: I am running my typing fingers through your cerebral chemicals.

⁵*Insight*, 588[610].

not reading adequately e.g. the reaching sadness in a friend's voice. I could become reachingly eloquent here and recall such cultural elements as Shakespeare's *Pericles* recalling of the sea, or the sea's re-caulling of Pericles.⁶ There is the context of the book mentioned in the note below, *Lack in the Beingstalk*, but now perhaps you might think about talk of the beingreed, a read threatened greedily by the prevalent cultural winds of general bias.

6.3 Ramblings Round⁷ the Larger Problem

We live in a culture of philosophy and theology that is largely in the grip of Fontenelle, of *haute vulgarization*.⁸ But now we ramble, and the rambling itself is an exercise beyond our reach in that culture. So, our ramble is just another facet of my invitation, my stand "against all sorts of mortmain"⁹: it is an invitation, among many other ventures, to *Roun Doll*, *Home James*,¹⁰ and the "Round, Doll", for instance, has been

⁶The final section of chapter 2 of McShane, *Lack in the Beingstalk: A Giants Causeway*, Axial Press, Halifax, 2004, deals with aspects of adult growth in Shakespeare and Joyce, with a focus on the integrative symbolism of the sea.

⁷Recall note 1 above, written more than a month ago. The need for a larger brooding becomes increasingly clear to me, and it leads me to do precisely that for the next few months, leading to elements in later *Quodlibets*: whose content, of course, I cannot anticipate but I know that it will pivot on what for me is a startling re-reading of the word *truth* as it occurs in chapter 17 of *Insight*. You find this weaving **round** strange no doubt. The weaving, rambling, round, is a character - should I not say the weaver, rambler is a character? - of the reach for a communal scientific *ethos* (see note 13 below) that is generations away.

⁸See *LCW* 6, 121, 155; *LCW* 10, 145. The context that adds Fontenelle is the concluding chapters of Butterfield's little classic on the scientific revolution.

⁹I am recalling Ezra Pound's stand in his poem *Commission*, quoted at length in the beginning of my *Music That Is Soundless, A Fine Way for the Lonely Bud A*, Axial Press, Halifax, 2004.

¹⁰The title of the projected four volumes containing the incomplete [41 instead of 117] Cantower series. The title and its meaning emerged at the end of Cantower 31.

a quite explicit topic early in that venture.¹¹ The larger problem? It turns up brutally when we muse seriously over the manner of coming to grips with the stages of meaning of which Lonergan writes. And how does one cope with the suspicion that it is not a matter of delicate statements about insufficiently cultured consciousness in a community but of a massively uncouth consciousness in oneself? A self, of course, that is a victim: but no less uncouth for that.¹²

The problem is *ethos*,¹³ or in less delicate terms it is the idiocy of general bias talking with some eloquence out of general bias in a sophisticated manner about sophistications. And I would make that statement less sophisticated by sliding away from its impossibly remote meaning to a simple relevant instance of Lonerganesque uncouthness. I would have you muse, then, over the standard performance of comparison by people who claim discipleship of Lonergan. Perhaps I should be comic in writing of this tragedy, remembering with Paddy Kavanagh that “tragedy is undeveloped comedy” and with Lonergan that “proofless purposeless laughter can dissolve honoured pretence”.¹⁴

It is perhaps worth pausing over a fairly standard technique of comparison. We

¹¹Cantower 4 raises the issue of the feminist lift to the Tower Project.

¹²Peter Berger remarked that “we become what we are addressed as by others”. So we are cut off from adult growth (see the final pages of *Lack in the Beingstalk*) and, consequently, from communal phylogenetic growth.

¹³*Topics in Education* leads gradually round and up to this problem. “The aesthetic apprehension of the group’s origin and story becomes operative whenever the group debates, judges, evaluates, decides, or acts - and especially in a crisis”(CWL 10, 230). The crisis now, to recall two key essay in CWL 17, is “bows and arrows facing muskets”(366) and it must be faced by a “projective test in which investigators reveal to reveal their own notions of authenticity and inauthenticity” (403), and are urged to do so to themselves and each other (*ibid.*) Page 250 of *Method in Theology* “becomes operative” “in the long run” (*ibid.*).

¹⁴*Insight*, 626[649].

are all familiar with it: “Lonergan and Whatsyername”. L. and W. are compared, contrasted, criticized, corrected, whatever. Comment on any such efforts here would be beside the point. What is needed, rather, is that you, such an author or not, take up the challenge of doing dialectic, assembling an essay or three “Comparing Lonergan and Whatshe” and rapping it round our exercise.¹⁵

You may not have such essays: indeed you may be a struggling beginner who, fortunately, has not been asked by some teacher to compare Lonergan and Whatshe. But have you not done some spontaneous comparison? Indeed, may your interest in Lonergan not have stemmed originally from unfavourable comparison of some Whatshe you were reading with an accidentally encountered Lonergan writing? Go your own way here, whatever helps. But I must stay with a few general rambling points.

In the comparative essay, then, there is normally not a great deal about the comparer. “Comparison examines ... to seek out”: but on what basis? Surely it would not be true that “their inquiry was *voraussetzunglos*,”¹⁶ for are we not Lonergan’s disciples, sincere about a home in transcendental method? Are we sufficiently at home there?¹⁷ Then why bring Lonergan into the essay at all?¹⁸

My rambles here raise questions that are enormously complex, like the one just

¹⁵It is the pointing of the first principle of the third canon of hermeneutics of *Insight* 588[611].

¹⁶*Insight*, 578[600].

¹⁷Notes 1, 7, 13 give a context for the negative answer. The problem of *Method in Theology* 14 is meshed with that of its pages 80(top) and 350-1. “Breathless and late” (*Insight* 733[755]), no “one can go on” (*Method*, 287, middle: in the crisis paragraph, the *ethos* detector).

¹⁸You recall that I am writing here about doing functional specialist work. Old-style comparison is quite an admissible device as a non-specialist fallout or fall-forward from the eighth speciality.

posed.. My notes of the past few days on that question are a mass of scribbled searchings. You too must scribble. But two broad pointers may help. First, page 250 of *Method* invites you - as it moves to its brutal end - to wind round the comparer that you are, in the company of others equally threatened with exposure. And that “final objectification” is never final: we are reaching, James and Oliveothers, for distant¹⁹ light on terminal values, for light on “the originating values that do the choosing”.²⁰

My second point relates to the legitimacy of locating Lonergan in the assembled. There is a sense in which that is the whole wonder and joke of the book and the project of *Method in Theology*. A generation or five of recycling of the work *Insight* through dozens of Rounds of functional specialization will lead us, “cajoling or forcing attention,”²¹ to begin to read that classic, that displaced graduate text. We are back at the notion of TUV, at where we stand, on an altogether lower slope in this venture than the 49-year-old Lonergan who pushed forward and up in chapter 17 of *Insight* with waxed skills through thin air.

But note, at least vaguely, how the two points come together to eliminate Lonergan both as a mythic instrument of comparison and as a privileged term of comparison. Lonergan’s expressions become grist for this new post-axial mill of history, this new churn of the Idea.

Still, the old style comparison doesn’t look half bad, even in this context: unless one faces the present exercise with the discomfiting seriousness that it acquires through analogies with successful scientific ventures.

¹⁹The Preface to *Searching for Cultural Foundations* (ed. P. McShane: University Press of America, 1984) is titled “Distant Probabilities...”. A millennium? The distance depends on us.

²⁰*Method in Theology*, 49.

²¹*Insight*, 398[423].

6.4 Ramblings Round the Exercise

Kuhn's work of forty years ago started a tradition of historical studies, but within physics there has always been, implicitly, such a tradition: the twentieth century begins to make it a thematic interest, moving it towards a controlling status that lifts the simple canons of empirical inquiry into the context of a hermeneutics intrinsic to physics.

That first sentence of this section is something of a joke: it would seem, indeed, to represent a more difficult exercise than the one with which we are dealing. What possible help is it, then? The help is in drawing your attention to what is implicit both in the original exercise and in Lonergan's moving viewpoint, in *Insight*, regarding what goes on in the advance of physics. It lifts you out of a naive reading of the canon of operations, but only if you are up to and for some patient grim climbing beyond accepted perspectives both on Lonergan and on serious work in physics. The view of these *Quodlibets* is that none of us are up to or for this: we need a communal effort and mutual support. "Comparison examines to seek out". The serious contemporary physicist, whether with nose to the cyclotron or head in the air, is a comparer. The really good ones know this: I think of my recent reading of Mead and O'Riifeartaigh.²² I think of a classic like Whittaker's two volumes on *Aether and Electricity*.²³ But what do you think of, of what are you to think, to help distant communities towards the possession of elders?²⁴

²²Carver Mead's little book, *Collective Electrodynamics*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2000, brings a fresh perspective to the muddles of 20th century physics. Lochlainn O'Riifeartaigh, *The Dawning of Gauge Theory*, Princeton University Press, 1997, gives a context for a differentiated dialectic analysis.

²³Sir Edmund Whittaker, *A History of Theories of Aether and Electricity*, Harper Torchbooks, 1960; 2 volumes.

²⁴This is a large topic within the weave of the problem of *ethos* (see notes 1, 7, 13, 17 above). See Sandy Gillis's contribution to *Journal of Macrodynamical Analysis* 4(2004).

Well, might you not think of that part of the exercise that claims that comparison “merges the two sets of canons”? In the 1980s and later I drew parallels between the two sets. In particular I paralleled the canon of operations with the canon of successive approximations.²⁵ You could certainly start there, examining both to seek out ... heavens, does that not ring familiar? Have you been reading those canons all along in relation to you? We are turned round here to the troubles you read of in the second canon of hermeneutics.

Present physics is being cajoled or forced through these troubles, one might say surprisingly, by finality’s **yearning** for the complete²⁶ idea, towards an operative use of Lonergan’s view of *Comparison*. A diachronic hermeneutic perspective holds sway in the search for an improved *assembly* of hypotheses and better check-outs of the ongoing *assembly* of data, itself massively historical.²⁷

Now you might say that this physics stuff is beside the point. Your business is theology, or philosophy, not modern physics. Your business, rather, if you are in the Tower of Functional Specialization, is the concrete good, being and becoming and the integral heuristic thereof. The first four specialties slope up mercilessly towards that

²⁵See *Process*, chapter 4, or Cantower 14. What we are doing here is working forward towards a larger view of the parallel between the canon of operations and the canon of successive approximations.

²⁶I deal with the meaning of *complete* in the canon of complete explanation in *Journal of Macrodynamical Analysis* 4(2004).

²⁷This is an extremely complex topic of a third order of consciousness raised by Lonergan in an early version (February, 1965) of a first chapter for *Method*. It relates to the shift from logic to method which haunts *Method in Theology*. Perhaps your fantasy is helped by envisaging a “distant” new systematics of the seventh specialty as cycling round within later general categories, always in the *ethos* of glimpsing history as analogous to the system relating early to later tadpole.

integral challenge of “the events”, events that groan for an explanatory cherishing.²⁸ The groaning extends, in marvellous integrality, “from physics to Semitic literature.”²⁹

6.5 Round, Tentatively

Theology and philosophy in the 1950s was not up to this challenge of *Insight*: fifty years later it is still dodging the more modest challenge of genuinely communal searching. Where might we begin? Obviously, but not at all obviously, we begin by admitting into consciousness the inadequacy, the dodging, the millennia-long narrow tunnelling of methodological reflection. If we are not up to breaking out of the biased tunnelling, then there is modest preaching and suffering prayer: the Cure d’Ars did solid good, and Theresa of Liseaux changed more than convent consciousness. But pragmatically one can add to preaching and prayer the mix of both that is genuine pedagogy.³⁰ Then the admission becomes a commitment to small encouragements and little efforts, and one is back in the first paragraph of *Insight*’s first chapter.

There are many ways of beginning **The Exercise**. Here I draw attention to a simple entry point, the point in *Insight* where interpretation first becomes of interest: “a problem of interpretation arises.”³¹

The problem is a key problem in twentieth century physics, and it is a hermeneutic problem. “Comparison examines and seeks out”, and one must brood

²⁸One can detect this in direct bluntness in *Insight* chapter 16. Of course, reading *Romans* 8 within a suspicion of an explanatory perspective is a tadpole glimpse of God’s caul in the womb of history. But perhaps it is as well to recall here (see e.g. Cantowers 4, 41) my old Tomega Principle about mutual embrace: “Theoretic understanding, then, seeks to solve problems, to erect syntheses, to embrace the universe” (*Insight*, 417[442]).

²⁹*Insight*, 733[755].

³⁰A relevant context here is Cantower 21, which homes in on the lift towards cataphatic contemplation.

³¹*Insight*, 162[186].

over the related few pages.³² The brooding, of course, will eventually become undergraduate work, but for you now it would be a matter of a commitment to move from present occupations to an eccentric climb, deeply rewarding but resented. As the note below intimates, the self-pedagogic treatment of this problem requires generous enlargement, generous particularization.³³

Notice first the sequence of interpretations that one must **bear in mind** as one moves to share Lonergan's refined view.³⁴ The key lead here is in the bold-faced **bearing in mind** and it would be useful to tie that bearing in with reflective interpretation and "the grasp of habitual grasp".³⁵ Now swing back to "the canon of operations, a principle of cumulative expansion. Laws guide activities, which bring forth new laws, which guide further activities as so forth indefinitely."³⁶ Is not this view also an operative law, a genetically (and *per accidens* dialectically) structured law-nest, to be bared and born in mind within the canon in its maturity?³⁷

And should one not also bear in mind with luminosity of third-order consciousness the distinction between content and act in empirical investigations and the relevant oscillations of attention?³⁸ Indeed, should the operative necessity of the

³²See Terrance Quinn, in *JMDA* 4(2004).

³³I illustrate this quite concretely in Cantowers 27-31. These Cantowers parallel the first five chapters of *Insight*.

³⁴You note, I hope, that the problem of this sharing lies within the perspective developed above through notes 1,7,13,17.

³⁵*Insight*, 563[586].

³⁶*Insight*,74[98].

³⁷One can think here of Kuhn of course; but one can also bear in mind, say, Haydon White's sequence-analysis of interpretative perspectives in history.

³⁸ *Insight*, 81[104].

fully developed³⁹ generalized empirical method not quietly burst on the maturing scene? Must one not, further, be luminous, with novel feed-back luminosity, regarding language's grounding tripod correlation.⁴⁰ All this as formal cause and effect⁴¹ of the Comparer, a protean notion of being that yearns hiddenly to move from dark self-presence to luminous self-possession,⁴² luminous in the possession of contents and contexts?⁴³ So it is, "so it comes about",⁴⁴ that the sophistications and complexities of the shift to explanation move the Comparer's empirical method in the natural sciences into the full hermeneutics of the eight specialties.

But also so it is that the simplistic hermeneutics of earlier historical and biblical studies are to be driven to bear in mind that same complexity in a denser context that demands richer and deeper controlling symbolisms:⁴⁵ thus, in a strange axial way, yearning for post-axiality, one may notice and embrace that "the issue has shifted from

³⁹The precise definition is given in *A Third Collection*, the top lines of page 141, but it was in operation in Lonergan long before he wrote *Insight*.

⁴⁰*Insight*, 555[578]. This triple correlation, casually mentioned here, is powerful in its heuristic potential for dealing with the shifting descriptive meanings that bedevil the second canon of hermeneutics, but this calls for a separate article if not a book. *Method in Theology*, 88, n. 34, adds the perspective of linguistic feedback, which relates to the twist of "How-language" (*A Brief History of Tongue*, chapter 2).

⁴¹I am recalling here a particular case of metaphysical equivalence (*Insight* 505[530], a technique which must gradually become luminously operative.

⁴² A useful context is the article "Towards a Luminous Darkness of Circumstances. *Insight* after forty years", available on the Website.

⁴³*Insight*, 567[590]. I would note here my discomfort with the editor's restructuring here and elsewhere of Lonergan's first text; 580[602].

⁴⁴*Insight*, 515[537]. This is in the centre of a powerfully discomfiting challenge of the book, cousin to the challenge pointed to in the final reference of this essay.

⁴⁵The point was made in the final section of Cantower 33. It was to have been the topic of the Cantowers of 2008.

physics to Semitic literature". One THEN⁴⁶ asks, in a remote contemplative way, about the yearnings, the desires of the everlasting hills.

THEN one reads *Romans* 8, 19-23, in a fresh cycling with an uncommon sense quite alien to common sense⁴⁷ yet the mustard source of different street-eyes. What, THEN, is this groaning longing of creation that lurks in my molecules? The cycling of the minding molecules of humanity is to bring forth an ever-richer cycling through the specialties of a genetic hold, "a law of the spirit",⁴⁸ of the yearning talked of by Paul, Luther and Thomas,⁴⁹ Barth and Lonergan.⁵⁰

Lonergan has been listed here. But what has Lonergan to do with this, and with the everlasting hills and riverruns? Lonergan as listed, is part of the assembled; but Lonergan as assembler, completer, comparer, could end his own page 250 with the list

⁴⁶The title of Cantower 5 is "Metaphysics THEN", which points to a sublation of Zen and Ken thinking.

⁴⁷I was recently asked whether the movement of understanding and judgment within functional interpretation was within common sense. One finds one's answer by brooding over just **what** is **verified** here. Reaching in the manner of note 1 above one can fancy the complex of explanatory correlations, within the cumulative and progressive results of centuries, "this wide-ranging and multiply interlocked coherence" (*Insight*, 590[612]) in which would nest the refinements of current pure formulations and hypothetical expressions.

⁴⁸*Romans* 8:2.

⁴⁹I note here a previous essay, "Ecological Justice", chapter 2 of *The Redress of Poise*, where I raise issues of Luther and Thomas re *Romans*. [available, www.philipmcs Shane.ca].

⁵⁰I recommend two contexts from Lonergan. His Latin work, *De Ente Supernaturale*, and his musing about *exigence* (see the index) in *Phenomenology and Logic*.

on pages 286-7, yearning for some few⁵¹ to emerge and scheme⁵² and “go on,”⁵³ but also himself integrally grounding, in the beauty of a new metaphysics, a network of recurrence-schemes that, after all, were groaning in the history of physics and the huntings of hermeneutics.

⁵¹See the concluding lines of *Collection*. Really, what I reaching for here is some few, or perhaps in you of this sad generation, the encouragement of the emergence of them in this century.

⁵²We are to become increasingly “the executor of the emergent probability of human affairs” (*Insight*, 227[252]), scheming towards new facings and pacings in streets, classrooms, bedrooms.

⁵³*Method in Theology*, 287. It is fitting to conclude with this regular reference of mine, the key embarrassment of the book