

Quodlibet 9

Some Foundational Pointings Regarding Evaluation

9.1 Contexts

In this short four-part essay I wish to home in - but in the random fashion of associable with the external functioning of Communications - on two sets of problems. There is what might be called now the regular zone associated with the discussion of feelings in *Method in Theology*, and this occupies me in the second section. There is the larger zone of functional specialization as evaluative, and to that I turn in the third section. The present section putters round with the title of the essay and the contexts it reaches for, and the issue of contexts generally. I use the words *putter round* deliberately: I am attempting to do something that is still unfamiliar in its demands. That something is "foundational fantasy", a something that has occupied me since the mid-1970s. By the fourth section I hope to be able to get us towards a better idea of that type of **regarding**.

"Something that has occupied me since the mid-1970's", yet that statement could lead to non-foundational distractions. In section 4 I shall talk of a foundational presence of its meaning, but in this initial section I am talking of its possibility as leading us back or forward to a type of dialectic reflection and to an expressing of the road to my present stance. Foundational talk, at its core foundational fantasy, is a reach towards the future, a contemporary lift to Thomas' *respondeo dicendum*. At its best, in its much later maturity, it, or rather they, will live in the zone of "pure formulations". That pair of words has been a problem to me and to many others since we met them in *Insight*, but oddly they lead us to a key illustration of foundational fantasy, not known as such at the time of their writing in 1953. In that deeply incomprehensible brief section of chapter 17, *The Sketch*, Lonergan clues us into the meaning of *pure formulation*: "they are pure formulations if they proceed from an interpreter that grasps the universal viewpoint and if they are addressed to an audience that similarly grasps the universal

viewpoint.”¹ That certainly is fantasy; and such fantasy dominates his treatment of interpretation in the remainder of the chapter. In *Method in Theology* he comes down from this lonely envisagement to the question of the genesis of some such universal viewpoint in an early footnote² that directs further expressions of the task in that book.

To make sense of this I find it useful to appeal to the analogy with a successful science, an appeal which begins the book *Method in Theology*. Please don't take fright at this: you don't need physics to get the point, yet the parallel is a helpful lead to the whole future task of the cycling of functional specialization.

Physics, and pop-physics, have made it common to talk of Grand Unification Theories, GUTs. But what really is involved in practice are TUTs, tentative unification theories. Similarly, what are to be involved, in this next century of metaphysics, are TUVs, tentative universal viewpoints.

The parallel helps us glimpse the problem of beginnings. Present TUTs are pretty remote theoretical entities, but they have their baby roots in early Greek searchings, and a first ground-breaking in *The Sleepwalkers*, Kepler and Galileo. Now, with talk of Lie algebras and fibre-bundle geometries, the searchings and searchers are on the edge of a maturity that, quite magnificently, had been anticipated by Lonergan in the early 1950s: the search is for primary and secondary determined relations of cosmic geometry. In present philosophy, theology and methodology there is a great deal of creative sleepwalking, but not sufficient operative signs of the equivalent of the advanced algebras and geometries of collaboration. But a TUV, an tentative universal viewpoint, casts its sun-shadow through the various fragmentations of culture: about this and its promise I say something in sections 3 and 4.

¹*Insight*, 580[602].

²*Method in Theology*, 253.

9.2 Simple Evaluation

By simple evaluation I mean the process by which one arrives at a judgment of value.

I wish here to draw attention to a few aspects of the study of this process, and to do this in a manner that is recognizable as a foundational pedagogy of fantasy.

Each of us, then, is a complex chemical, reaching forward “evaluatively” in history with an autonomy that is a layered possession of self and cosmos. Hopkin’s naming of “immortal diamond” helps but falls far short of that complex longing. Gradually that longing is investigated, self-investigated, in all its neuro-subtlety, but one makes a sleepwalking start with Aquinas. What are the delicate movements and self-movements that carry and lead the amoeboid human to the intussusception of a morsel of real or apparent happiness? There is the fantasy-start of Thomas’ weaving through questions 7-17 of the *Prima Secundae*. How, for instance, do you cherish pleasing plans within the support or opposition of some up-datedly conceived *vis cogitativa*?³

Evidently the cherishing is chemical. And so it lifts on. We are here back - or forward - in an enlivening of Lonergan’s doctorate work, an enlivening that was beyond him at the time. And we can be on our way beyond phenomenology to a metaphysics of our morsel-hunt if we pick up on his achievement of the mid-1940s, an achievement that did not find its way into *Insight*.

Let us pause over this foundational fantasy. “Capacity-for-performance” in

³One can get into this by going back to Peghaire’s work, referenced in Lonergan’s *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, but one has to struggle into some sense of the modern problematic. Books I found useful here are Candace Pert, *Molecules of Emotion: The Science behind Mind-body Medicine*, Touchstone paperback, 1999; Rita Carter, *Mapping the Mind*, Phoenix paperback, 1998; V.S.Ramachandran and Sandra Blakelee, *Phantoms of the Brain. Probing the Mysteries of the Human Mind*, William Morrow and Company, New York, 1998. There is a growing relevant literature on integral medicine. Offhand, I think of an early effort by Norman Cousins, *Heads First. The Body of Hope and the Healing Power of the Human Spirit*, Penguin books, 1989.

Insight is to be identified with a sublated metaphysics of *potentia activa*. Further, one must cling to, embrace, the concreteness of the metaphysical references: *potentia activa* in the concrete is an infolding of the longing internal to energy in its finality. And that concreteness holds the reality and one's thinking about it in the glow of the dynamism of central form and its proportionate act.⁴

The self-appropriative task that I express thus helpfully and simply in metaphor is arduous, especially in the absence of an *ethos* regarding and guarding its undertaking. It is further helpful, perhaps, to identify a lengthier foundational pointing in Thomas: his 77th question of the *Prima Pars*, which leads one towards a general grip on the nature and genesis and fate of the potencies of the soul. The high point in the foundational struggle is captured in the sixth article, "Whether the potencies of the soul flow from its essence". One would be very fortunate here if one carried into the battle a grip on the relevant short doctrinal expression in *Insight* that begins "study of an organism....".⁵

⁴It is perhaps an oddity here that a turn to Christology is a help, even though our focus is on the mesh of self-attention and metaphysics that is ahead of us, in the next footnote, in the decades of collaboration involved. Raymond Maloney, in a precise and discerning article ("The Mind of Christ in Transcendental Theology: Rahner, Lonergan and Crowe", *Heythrop Journal*, XXV[1984], 288-300) writes of "the resultant joy in the affective faculties" (292) due to Jesus' vision. I am writing of a more radical resultance, a natural resultance that characterizes the faculties, ontologically prior to the vision, that I write of in the next paragraph. That natural resultance, in the case of Jesus, looks back to the act by which Jesus is human, a difficult topic in the study of graces (For a context see, "Grace: the Final Frontier", chapter 7 of McShane *The Redress of Poise*, www.philipmcshane.ca). This is the fuller context of finality, a context meshed with that of chapter 20 of *Insight*. But here the topic is cut back to reflections on our "ordinary" human form-matter as source of accidental forms. That narrower background has its inspiration, for me, in B.Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, 121-51. See especially page 147.

⁵*Insight*, 464[489]. What this key text looks to is the full development of the metaphysics that is hinted at in chapters 15 and 16 of *Insight*. The full explanatory context is remote and depends on such exercises as this *Quodlibet* envisages. Lonergan's key precise statement on the matter is in section 3 of Quaestio XXXVI of *De Deo Trino II Pars Systematica* (Gregorian Press, Rome, 1964): even in the beginning of a science it is inconvenient to hang in with

But even without that grip, with a tincture of system, one can get a sense of “natural resultance” in Aquinas statement about the emanation of proper accidents from a substance. The sense can seed the further climb to an aggreformic appreciation of human sensibility as human, as chemicals caught in the weave of finality, meshed into the exigence that is the heart of human living, giving “intentional consciousness its mass, momentum, drive, power”.⁶ And thus one may arrive at a fresh reading of those words, and “from such a broadened base one can go on to a developed account of the human good, values, beliefs, to the carriers, elements, functions, realms and stages of meaning, to the question of God, of religious experience, its expression, its dialectic development”.⁷ The words begin to ache inwardly with the finality of energy and momentum; the meaning of *drive* is woven into an explanatory context of “the law of effect”⁸; the power is identified as the aggregate of capacities-for-performance that suffer (*pati*) the grandeur of the lift of universal instrumentality towards an eschatological poise.

9.3 Complex Evaluation

By complex evaluation I mean the full collaborative cycling of functional specialization whose high point is suitably called *Completion*. That high point calls out, a glorious *pati*, the best of the mass, momentum, drive, power, in a stand in and with the cosmic yearning described in *Romans* 8: 19-23. The high point is contextualized by an integral division of labor that, roughly, divides into two types of task: the task of forwarding discernment that belongs to the fourth and fifth specialties; the task of using

descriptive categories.

⁶*Method in Theology*, 30.

⁷*Ibid.*, 287.

⁸*Insight*, 467[492].

the fruits of that discernment in the luminous network of discernments that constitute the other specialties.

Oddly, complex evaluation is prior in present necessity to the study of simple evaluation. In concrete logical terms, complex evaluation, which might have been listed as number (10) on page 287 of *Method in Theology*, is really number one on the operational list. In historical terms, Lonergan is the foster-father of the division of labor that is named functional specialization, but the real mother and father is the mass and momentum of the capacities-for-performance that evolved in fragments within and around culture, a messy multidisciplinary cover-story hiding a global exigence. It groans in various ways for collaborative functional divisions, and that collaboration is the fundamental challenge of our century.⁹

Within that collaboration there will be the stumbling efforts needed to foster in an increasingly beautiful and efficient operative unity the process that is the simple evaluation.¹⁰

The tasks proposed as methodological doctrines in the second section call for complex evaluation. Might they be cherished by people in various specialties and in a range of disciplines? Are they worth undertaking in new patterns of research and self-research, in a lift of fuller discernment of the discernments of deliberation throughout history? Even the above slim doctrinal description of them can call forth in the dialectically inclined a *Completion Yes* by which, in the double take of *Method* p. 250, a range of relative best foundational poises can be made existentially present, and the specialized work of foundational fantasy freshly seeded in the global community.

⁹Recall the 29 occurrences of *collaboration* in section 5 of chapter 20 of *Insight* mentioned in the conclusion of *Quodlibet* 7, and the lift of reading of that word suggested there.

¹⁰One might think here, fantasize, about the economic democracy envisaged by Lonergan and the beauty of its full luminous operation in a culture of microautonomy and mesoeconomic activities. That fantasy is implicit in the challenge of *Quodlibet* 8: “My Dialectic of My Town, Ma Vlast”.

9.4. Foundational Fantasy

I first hit on the task of fantasy as foundational in the early 1970s, and ventured into the zone in an essay which was to become the fourth chapter of *The Shaping of the Foundations*. My lead came from Herbert Marcuse: “Without fantasy, all philosophic knowledge remains in the grip of the present or the past and severed from the future, which is the only link between philosophy and the real history of mankind.”¹¹ I made no effort to pin down with precision the meaning of fantasy: it could be taken elementarily as a flexing of imagination towards future possibilities. Perhaps, in the light of even the brief sketchings of section 2, refinements seem possible? This is not the place for those refinements, which after all depend on venturing into the tasks surrounding the interpretation and implementation of Thomas *Ia IIae*, qq. 7-17. But general doctrinal directions are possible.¹²

A broader sense of the start can be reached by musing over the peculiar phrase I have been using over for years: “the discernment of discernments of discernments”.¹³

¹¹Herbert Marcuse, *Negation. Essays in Critical Thinking*, translated by Jeremy L. Shapiro, Boston, 1968, 155.

¹²This, I know, is a disappointment, when what is desperately needed is detailed guidance that would eventually ground an *ethos* regarding the empirics and metaphysics of evaluation, “something similar in the tone, the color, the way of doing things, that attitudes that are said to be characteristic of the regional group” (B. Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, 252). But the relevant exercise is already summarily presented, without an adequate controlling metaphysics, in the forty dense Latin pages of the text of Thomas just mentioned. In Gilby’s translation there is an appendix on the topic that is a useful start: does he get the famous twelve steps right? The works mentioned in the two final footnotes here point us towards fuller contexts of our efforts. In *Quodlibet* 12, “Completion and Evaluation”, I shall return to a question that perhaps has bubbled up from your reading of sections 2 and 3: what connection is there between those twelve steps and the six italicized words on page 250 of *Method*?

¹³E.g., it occurs in the conclusion of the essay, “The Value of Lonergan’s Economics for Lonergan Students”, *The Redress of Poise*, chapter 1: available on www.philipmcshane.ca. I was pushed in this direction by Lonergan’s suggestions about three orders of consciousness, made in an early draft (Spring, 1965) of chapter one of *Method*. It is available in the Lonergan Archives, in Batch V.7.

Discernment, an Ignatian word, has a first ordinary meaning, the performative meaning assumed in doing *The Exercises*. One moves to a second level of consciousness by self-appropriating that performance: that new performance can be called *method*. But what of the third *discernment*? One attends to the second order discernments. One is in metahistory: one is doing method-ology. Perhaps here you would find my usual parallel useful: methodology is to method what zoology is to animals.

We are, of course, in fantasy-land here, with foundational fantasy turning in on itself in a deeply appropriate twist to cherish a beautiful possibility.¹⁴ The cherishing can take on the luminosity of whatever stage of foundations the community has reached: so one can fantasize about the goals of both section 2 and section 3 as solidly reached: then there can be a community of How-language,¹⁵ a presence of heuristics anastomotically haunting our every word. And to continue this fantasy, the presence would haunt all the specialties: a methodological minding at the level of the new times would control the cycling of meaning. But let us pause in conclusion over a more proximately feasible illustration.

A new systematics is emerging that is a genetic controlling of the total sequence of global systems of method. It is a mind-set, a mentality, that e.g. views Tertullian or Plotinus not in isolation but as a member of the tadpole-dynamic of such systems' story. But that mind-set itself circulates, so that it is a presence in the researcher, the interpreter, etc. It is an new level of collaboration, a fresh TUV, seeded performatively by the natural resultances that have been the topic here all along.

That this involves at present a fresh novel fantasy is brought out solidly by the

¹⁴The cherishing has the subtlety of the concrete that envisages the *per se* and the *per accidens*, the *ut in pluribus*. Enlargements of the beautiful possibility can bubble up within any task, within any minder of humanity.

¹⁵“How-Language: Works?” is the title of chapter 2 of McShane, *A Brief History of Tongue: From Big Bang to Coloured Wholes*, Axial Press, Halifax, 1999. The book supplements an earlier effort, *Wealth of Self and Wealth of Nations*, chapter 7 of which is an elementary introduction to the problem of evaluation.

decade-long effort of Robert Doran to retrieve the full richness of Lonergan's struggle with the relation of history to system. Lonergan's chapter on Systematics in *Method* is minimalist, yet still can be recognized as fantasy: we could move forward out of conceptualism.¹⁶ Doran makes plausible and possible a communal enlargement of perspective that would ground a powerful break-through in methodology.¹⁷ It is, for him, a distant goal, tied in strategically with the dynamics of psychic conversion. I like to think that the present article seeds a piece of that road, with the minimalist fantasy of a fuller attention to Thomas' foundational work on evaluation¹⁸ and a concomitant meshing of that effort into a fresh discernment of the consent to, and the choice of, a global cultural division of labor.

¹⁶Chapter 12 of *Method* is brief and to this point, but one can see it as fantasy of a realm beyond truncated axially. What of chapter 13? If it is thought of as pointing more towards the redoing of interpretation and history, then it too can be seen as hope-filled fantasy. And the first section of chapter 14 has lurking in its brevity a deep reach for self-luminous characters of a later age.

¹⁷It seems simplest here just to refer to Robert Doran's Forthcoming book, *What is Systematic Theology?*, University Press of Toronto, 2006.

¹⁸Above (note 12) I drew attention to Gilbey's comments. One has a broader start with Frederick Crowe's "St. Thomas and the Concrete *Operabile*", *Sciences Ecclesiastiques*, 1955-6, and his "Complacency and Concern in the Writings of St. Thomas, *Theological Studies*, 1959.